The Salvation of Yasch Siemens: A Second Reading

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In a time when a linear-thematic movement away from their ethnic background may be observed in the ethnic literatures of Canada, and when on the formal level a movement from the didactic to the experimental is discernable, no such distance to the ethnic group can be detected in the writing of Armin Wiebe.

In his book, *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens* the Mennonites occupy the middle ground as they did in the early work of Rudy Wiebe. This time though the community is seen from a perspective which Doug Whiteway has called "comic self-mockery."[1]

The character of the Mennonites as a religious minority is hardly described; instead non-religious attributes come into the foreground. For this reason there is no mention of the Mennonites but only of the *Flat Germans*, an indication of the progressive secularization of the Mennonites, who here distinguish themselves from the majority only through their linguistic otherness.

Before dealing with the constituent elements of the comedy of *Yasch* (which has dominated the reception and criticism of the book to this point), something must be said about the novel's form, its structure and narrative technique.

In reading the novel it soon becomes clear that *Yasch* is made up of a relatively loose series of single episodes. In a number of places the action is interrupted and no continuity is visible from one chapter to the next. This is most obvious in the protagonist's progress through time. The third chapter, situated between the second, in which the fifteen-year-old Yasch describes the proceedings of New Year's Eve and the fourth, in which he, now twenty-three years of age begins to work on Ha Ha Nickel's farm, is of no significance for the progress of the novel, since it only depicts the episode in which

Yasch takes his mother to the "right-maker." Nor is the second time-gap of twelve years, between Oata's pregnancy in chapter nine and Yasch's homespun philosophical and political observations in the following chapter, especially comprehensible. In content too the chapters are very different from one another: while most of the chapters deal with timeless and universal matters, with the nature of a country community and the human problems connected with growing up in such an environment, Armin Wiebe in the tenth chapter becomes extraordinarily concrete and comments on the idiosyncracies of Canadian politicians and television and newspaper journalists.[2] David Arnason sheds some light on this problem in that he, as a reader for Turnstone Press, had advised Armin Wiebe to unite the original series of short stories by unifying the characters and making other minor changes in order to form a novel.[3]

The episodic structure which resulted, the content structure as well as the first person perspective suggest that in *Yasch* Armin Wiebe is resurrecting the picaresque genre. Claudio Guillen lays out the criteria of this genre thus:

> The picaro is, first of all, an orphan....A young *orphan*, then, faces early dishonour or want and is led to break all the ties with his native city. He has an unusually precocious taste of solitude....Left without a father, or a mother, or both, he is obliged to fend for himself...in an environment *for which he is not prepared*. He is for the moment an insular, isolated being. He has not been adapted to ruling conventions or shaped into a social or moral person. The family, in this sense, has not fulfilled its primary functions.[4]

Yasch is half orphaned: his father is supposed to have disappeared in Mexico.[5] His mother remains present in the background but is not perceived to have any influence over him. Since she belongs to the generation of the Flat Germans whose orientation is solely to the past, she is incapable of preparing Yasch for his "environment." She is scarcely capable of English and her interests are limited to news of "third or fourth cousins in Paraguay" read in the German language *Steinbach Post*.[6]

Yasch is thus thrust out into the world without the benefit of the "primary functions" of the family, or, as Guillen says: "The beginnings of knowledge are forced upon the young boy by the shock of premature experience. All values must be discovered by him anew, as if by a godless Adam."[7] In addition Yasch comes from a background of poverty and fits into the picaresque scheme in that way too: his mother's clothes are made from sack cloth, the windows of their house are hung with old flour sacks. Also, Yasch embarks on his "wanderings" from a condition of extended unemployment.[8] Guillen's formulation of the "half-outsider (who can)...neither join nor actually reject his fellow men," can be applied readily to Yasch, who is indeed present everywhere but belongs nowhere.[9]

Guillen's second criterion of the picaresque novel as "pseudo-autobiography" is clearly outlined in *Yasch*:

> The use of the first-person tense is more than a formal frame. It means that not only are the hero and his actions picaresque, but everything *else* in the story is coloured with the sensibility, or filtered through the mind of the picaro-narrator.[10]

In *Yasch* too the narrator slips into the role of the unknowing commentator, whose ignorance is sometimes accompanied by an uncanny naivete. For example, Yasch has the following to say about the new technology of television: "...it's almost the same like radio except you can't do nothing else. You have to just listen and look."[11] As true as this observation may be, there is no way that a picaro who perceives his world in this lethargic manner can be converted to the right path with only one shock of initiation, like the blow of the blind man who struck the head of Lazarillo of Tormes on the stone steer of Salamanka.[12] The steps taken by Yasch out of his simple state are considerably smaller and so Guillen's "shock of premature experience" is divided by Yasch into a plethora of lesser shocks. Time and again Yasch is exploited by others and always he realizes the seriousness of his situation only when it is already too late for him. What is being done to him, as the youngest and most defenceless member of the clique around Hova Jake, when he as the only one is forced into wearing a dress on New Year's Eve, comes home to him only when Hauns Jaunses Frauntz, the most unappetizing character of Guthenthal, approaches him for a kiss.

The subsequent "shock(s) of premature experience" materialize accordingly: on the very same evening Yasch is kissed by the beautiful Serena, Willy Wahl's English wife—for him as unexpected an event.[13] Yasch only understands that he is giving Sadie Nickels, who is inclined to nymphomania, too much attention when her father, his employer, moves him to the neighboring farm. The fact that Oata draws him so completely into her sphere that he can no longer extricate himself dawns on him at a point when he has become irreplaceable there; how much he had been manipulated by Oata becomes clear only when she(!) proposes marriage to him. This list could be continued.

The third category of Guillen according to which the narrator is "also partial and prejudiced" is closely related to the second in that Yasch on the basis of his limited perspective is not capable of judging the consequences of the events concerning him and to act accordingly.[14] Extensively through the novel Yasch sees himself as a victim of contrary circumstances without realizing the role of his own incompetence or inactivity in the formation of the particular constellation.

Yasch's limited and one-sided perspective is clearly indicated by the linguistic means at his disposal: this is not so much the case with the syntax and vocabulary of his Low German derivative English as it is with the range and homogeneity of the field of his metaphors. His limited ability in using figurative language is a function of his milieu, the world of agricultural equipment and cars. There seems to be no part of daily life for which Yasch

cannot find a comparison among the technical refinements of cars and tractors: an old selfmade musical instrument "...changing the sounds, like a pulse, or a John Deer two-cylinder at different speeds...";[15] the microphone in church "...that looks like the front from a Massey Harris 44...";[16] Yasch giving in to the call of nature: "...I all of a sudden have to drain my radiator real quick...";[17] the sleeping Oata: "lying on her bed, snoring like a model T...."[18] Only occasionally does the narrator venture outside the technical realm, as for example his commentary on the engagement with Oata shows:

> Engaging with Oata is a little bit like having the horse run away with the manure sled and you are holding the reins on and dragging the barnyard through just after the snow has melted in the spring.[19]

The fact that Yasch also uses this naive style and its metaphors to illustrate his romantic inclinations is of some importance beyond the character of Yasch. Not only does it show his simplicity of character but it also informs the reader about the degree of secularization reached by the Mennonites of Gutenthal, since we see here how the inner experience and consciousness are completely de-romanticized, indeed "technicized."

Apart from this general aspect of Guillen's terms "partial" and "prejudiced," the one-sided perspective of the victim, they also may be applied to Yasch in their concrete, ordinary sense. Yasch adopts prejudices without reflection. The "cousin from Yanzeed" is quite naturally a "pluida zack" (a gossip).[20] This bias plays on the animosity between the two Mennonite settlement areas, the East and West Reserves, known as "this side" (Diesseits) and "that side" (Jenseits).

The narrator's comments on social change, on religion, customs, politics and the economic situation may be considered in connection with Guillen's fourth criterion:

> The total view of the *picaro* is reflective, philosophical, critical on religious and moral grounds. As an autobiographer and an outsider, he collects broad conclusions....
>
> The *picaro* as an "ongoing" philosopher, as a constant discoverer and rediscoverer, experimenter and doubter where every value and norm is concerned, never ceases to learn.[21]

Yasch's attitude to the church changes and two essential phases can be distinguished:

In the first phase of his development the church does not exactly influence Yasch in a way which gives his life a certain direction, but it does exert a gentle pressure on him and offers him some kind or moral guidance. Yasch submits to this pressure, but the deeper significance of the church has escaped his generation, and does not play an important role in Yasch's life.

Therefore Yasch finds it extremely annoying to have to spend New Year's Eve in church:

> ...it's special, they say, because instead of telling people who will have to do things like sing songs or say verses they have what they call freiwilliges. That means that anybody can go up and do something at the front. It sure is freewillingness all right, but not freewillingness enough that a person can stay home from church and listen to the top countrysongs for the year on the radio. No sir, such freewillingness it doesn't give here around.
>
> After the church the old ones go home and the youth is supposed to stay behind for the Watch Night service. That means sitting on a church bench waiting for the clock to reach midnight. At least if you could go around and collect some New Year's kisses it would be worth waiting for.[22]

The vision of the purity of his religious community, characteristic of people belonging to a "sect" according to Max Weber's definition, has been lost on Yasch.[23] He cannot understand why the marriage of a church member to a Canadian woman of English origin, and the man's inclination to adopt his wife's world view rather than his insistence that she adopt that of the religious community, does not find favour in Gutenthal.[24] Furthermore, Yasch rates religious holidays solely by their economic worth and allowance of leisure time: "...Himmelfahrt, that Thursday in the spring when Jesus goes to heaven and the Flat Germans go to Winnipeg..."[25]

The second phase is introduced in the sobering episode in which the minister is exposed as a hypocrite: Yasch's relationship with the church becomes one of cool distance. He sees the church, among other things, as a means of social contact for his wife and as a "good place to rest after a week's hard work."[26] The Bible becomes for him only a means toward an end, for example, it can be used to force his wife to do the housework.[27] Finally, Yasch even rejects a church wedding ceremony: "...we went to the judge in Emerson and got married there. I think it was just as good as in the Gutenthal church."[28]

The loss of social customs and practices also suggests the receding influence of the church on the social life of the community. Yasch cannot explain the linguistic origin of the word "Sylvesterabend" anymore: "Now why would the people call New Year's eve church after a cat in the comics?"[29]

The Gutenthaler Mennonites are no longer aware of the religious origins of certain social practises. The amateur dramatization in which a pope, a tsar, a soldier and a preacher are driven out of the United States, is meant to depict the Reformation, the settling in tsarist Russia, and the principle of non-resistance. But these essential truths of the Mennonite experience may have been forgotten by Yasch and his peers. They only come to life again through the stories told by a ninety-year old of "...how it was with the Flat Germans long ago in Russlaund and Dietschlaund and Hullaund right back to the time when everybody in the whole world was a Catlicker and prayed to Mary and paid money to the pope to be forgiven their sins...."[30] But this understanding lasts only for a short time. In the last chapter of the novel, Hova Jake, who had learned the significance of this social custom, appears as the campaign

manager for a P.C. convention, and confidently strikes up the national anthem "O Canada." It is as though he is initiating a new hymn to be sung by the "Flat Germans," symbolizing the coming assimilation of the Mennonites into the Canadian cultural mainstream. Robert Quickenden, in his review of the novel, also speaks of the impression given in the work of a vanishing culture: "...there is also a sense that the Mennonite culture, balanced precariously between the past and present is slowly vanishing."[31]

Guillen's fifth criterion, that deals particularly with the presentation of the material aspect of life and survival, pointing out that in the picaresque novel there are no "*relicta circumstancia*—no topics, persons or things unworthy of interest and compassion" that are not considered, is evident in the above-mentioned material.[32] Yasch leads a predominantly "hand-to-mouth" existence; thus the theme of hunger is implicit both on the existential level and in the figurative sense of "hunger for righteousness."

Furthermore, the r*elicta circumstancia* preoccupy Yasch more than anything else in the form of the banalities of every-day life. In his review Robert Quickenden speaks in this context of a "physical earthiness [which] invades anything that threatens to become abstract."[33]

In the earlier discussion of Yasch's linguistic abilities it was already evident that no object is too low or useless to be considered by Yasch. Further instances in which Yasch comments on trivialities could fill pages: they range from Yasch explaining how he has fastened springs in carseats, to his caustic comments on the sexual practices of a rival. He is hardly preoccupied with ideas, nor does he think about larger abstract constructs, with one exception which will be dealt with in the discussion of chapter eight.

The various "collective conditions" which are encountered by the protagonist—Guillen's sixth criterion—are also identified easily: Yasch is the "servant of a plurality of masters" (Hova Jake, Ha Ha Nickel, Oata) and the various roles and occupations, which he must therefore fulfill, are the source of the "comic effects" of the novel.[34]

Guillen's seventh criterion, the movement of the *picaro* "horizontally through space and vertically through society..." can only be shown in a condensed measure, yet the journey of the *picaro* as a structural condition for the narrative progression certainly exists.[35] Though Yasch may not move either from one city to another, nor from poverty to aristocracy, there is yet a sense of his moving through "the world:" the Mennonite world, which consists of Gutenthal and its rural surroundings.[36] As far as a similar mentality is concerned, the Mennonite settlements in Mexico are closer to the Mennonites of Gutenthal than cities located in the same Canadian province. "I should have clawed out of there fast, I guess, maybe to Mexico or Thompson even."[37]

This is the "world" in which Yasch moves; at times he ventures across the border into the USA, at other times he goes to Winnipeg, essentially though he moves from one farm to another. These stations of his "journey" also mark the stages of his vertical movements through society. The Mennon-

ite insider like Yasch sees clearly recognizable social differences between the particular families and farms, even though these are hardly discernible to the outsider. Huge economic and social differences exist between his mother's dilapidated and shabby farmyard, the disorganized Needarp Farm and the professional and highly efficiently managed estate of the "plowing match champion" Ha Ha Nickel.[36]

Thus the vertical movement of the character Yasch within society consists of his development from the unemployed laborer to the handy-man and finally to the successful owner of a small farm.

In the same meticulous way in which Armin Wiebe incorporates the picaresque elements into his narrative he also constructs the eighth chapter of his novel. This chapter deserves special attention and has not been dealt with in its complexity by critics so far. The content may be summarized as follows: Yasch is asked by the minister of the local congregation, Forscha Friesen, to give a testimony in church. The testimony is a personal statement of faith, the composition of which Yasch defines in this way: "First you have to tell when you were saved, and if you can say for sure what day it happened that makes it even better."[39] While Yasch is thinking about the formulation of his testimony, and examining memories of his childhood and youth, he coincidentally hears a radio broadcast in which he is being mocked by Forscha. In anger at the hypocrisy of the preacher, of whom he also retains many unpleasant memories, Yasch relates a shady episode in Forscha's youth while he is giving his testimony, thereby exposing Forscha to the congregation.

In this act, Yasch sees himself as figuratively exorcising the devil from the Gutenthal congregation. Armin Wiebe's artistic device consists of interweaving the narrator's flashbacks and the biblical allusions so successfully that the biblical motifs become the framework of the plot into which the Canadian setting and Mennonite characters are placed.

When later Oata, who has also heard Forscha's mockeries, asks Yasch if he believes what Forscha said, Yasch comes to the realization that he cannot resist giving his testimony.[40] This is one of the key passages of the novel:

> She [Oata] says it so fast that it feels like a whip. Like a piece of V-belt or extension cord....And all of a sudden you know that the real sin is between you and the V-belt and that if you ever told somebody about that the whole world would maybe fall apart. But I know something that I have to do and I take Oata by the shoulders and look in the brown eye and in the blue eye. And this time I don't wait for Oata to start something. I just give her the biggest and longest and suckingest kiss....[41]

The reader, who by this time has become familiar with Yasch's comparisons, understands that Oata is meant by the "V-belt." It is also obvious that with the word "sin" Yasch means the devil in the form of Forscha Friesen. Indeed it is a fact that "the whole world" of the Gutenthal community would fall apart if Yasch could successfully convince these people that the preacher is truly a devil.

Armin Wiebe works various biblical motifs into Yasch's flashbacks in order to make this metaphoric statement visible to the reader. Two of these motifs are dealt with comprehensively. Others are only mentioned briefly and serve to complete the picture. The characters in these episodes are generally Yasch's adolescent classmates.

The central Christ-figure is embodied in Emmanuel Rempel. During a Bible class in school the teacher points out the meaning of the name Emmanuel to the questioning children: "It means Jesus. That was his name before he was born."[42] From this moment on Emmanuel is nicknamed Jesus and is frequently teased with this name by his classmates. Further indications that clarify his position in Yasch's "parables" are: the fact that he doesn't seem to have parents ("...he came with his grandmother to live."), his charismatic leadership ("...a follower he wasn't") which is enhanced by his oratory skills ("And when he once started to talk you would just have to listen. His eyes would shine up and he talked like a song...") and his ability to do magical tricks, in other words, to perform miracles.[43]

In this context the small Yasch appears as one of the twelve apostles ("Emmanuel walked the yard across...and all the small boys went after him. I think there were eleven and me, too.")[44]

The first of the two passages in which biblical motifs appear quite liberally, is based on Matthew 14, 22-23. This passage contains the scene in which Jesus walks on the water toward the boat of his apostles:

Yasch and some other children are playing with an old boat in a water hole. As Emmanuel is late to arrive, the children begin to row out onto the water and while doing so they are singing "I will make you fishers of men." Emmanuel, arriving late, doesn't exactly walk across the water, but paddles toward the boat on a thick plank of wood. His classmate Penzel wants to imitate him, but sinks into the water in his attempt to reach the plank from the boat. Just like his biblical model Peter, Penzel seems about to drown and is rescued by Emmanuel. At the end of the episode Emmanuel is described as being surrounded by a type of halo: "...the sun was shining him behind, right by his head, and it was quite something to see."[45]

Further important characters are added in the second, more comprehensively applied biblical story, the Last Supper, (Mark 14, 12-26 par.). Yasch's classmate Forscha Friesen personifies the devil-figure, as has been anticipated by the reader earlier ("And nobody would think that in the Gutenthal church the Devil had been.")[46] In Yasch's flashbacks the school-boy Forscha is frequently depicted as a horse, galopping around the schoolyard ("Forscha scratched the ground with his shoe, then he made his horse noise...").[47] The biblical motif of the apocalyptic riders (Revelation 6, 1-8) is suggested by Forscha's "gang" imitating his behaviour.

Forscha's identification with the devil can also be seen in his "sinful" behaviour (masturbation) from Yasch's point of view, and especially in his constant attempts to spur his fellow classmates to mischief.[48]

Finally, Judy must also be mentioned, who, as is indicated by her name,

appears as the Judas-figure. This identity is substantiated by the fact that Judy is submissive to Forscha, which is also evident in the words scrawled across her scribbler ("...she had written 'I love Forscha' all over her spelling scribbler cover.").[49]

In an episode patterned after the Last Supper, Emmanuel prepares a picnic for a few other children in the bush. Judy has also been invited, but arrives late. Shortly after her arrival "Forscha and his herd" interrupt the scene violently, capture Emmanuel and mistreat him.[50]

An allusion to the biblical account of Peter's three-fold denial of Christ is made in this scene (Mark 14, 30, 66-72). Yasch is forced by Forscha to join in the act of torturing Emmanuel three times.

This episode Yasch relates to his congregation as his testimony. The biblical motifs of the Last Supper, the betrayal, abuse and denial of Christ constitute the framework for the narrative. They also serve as interpretive tools on two levels: first of all they show the immense importance Yasch attributes to his presentation; he is telling the members of the congregation the truth about the devil among them. Secondly they serve as signals from the author to the reader to distance himself from a narrator who lends an episode from his childhood such biblical grandeur.

The above-mentioned biblical motifs are interwoven with an additional one in the protagonist's consciousness: Yasch is so taken in and overwhelmed by the importance of his mission, that he imagines himself in the biblical account of the Pentecost story (Acts 2, 1-13).

Just as the biblical motifs are now also applied to the present time period, the two narrative levels are also joined at the structural level. This should be seen as another indication by the author that Yasch's perception of reality takes on visionary characteristics and thus is to be considered unreliable.

Yasch is highly irritated by Forscha's "Christian" mannerisms, by the fact that Forscha can after all the episodes of his youth still stand in the pulpit and "talk about Jesus like there is nothing to it...,"[51] while he knows that Forscha has not undergone any significant changes since his youth ("...for sure he is the same Forscha that used to be boss in the school yard..."). His agitated state about these matters explains the missionary zeal with which Yasch wants to enlighten his congregation.[52] For Yasch not to give his testimony at all would be tantamount to letting the devil win. Apart from the psychological pressure incurred, Yasch also sees the testimony as a test he must undergo to prove his worthiness to Oata.

The clues to the understanding of Yasch's fancying himself in the "pentecost situation" can be found amply in biblical parallels. Here Armin Wiebe allows Yasch to speak consciously in the Mennonite German church-language of his own "shtimm" and not his own "voice."[53] Entire passages in this scene are linked directly to the text of the "Acts of the Apostles":

> I tell it in Flat German. I tell it in English. I even tell some of it in High German. But mostly it is die gute language all mixed up....

> And I tell my story to the front rows. I tell it to the back. I tell it to the men's side. And I tell it to the women. I tell it to the balcony.[54]

Yasch's statements are interrupted by his visions of Emmanuel (i.e. Jesus) who is juggling balls in the balcony.[55]

At the end of his testimony, Yasch feels as though his tongue were paralyzed: "My jaws still move like I'm trying to tell something. But no shtimm comes out."[56]

Without a doubt Armin Wiebe has touched the Mennonite *Substanz* in this scene. In a careful and thoughtfully conceived way he exploits the Mennonite method of interpreting the Bible, the practice of applying the teachings of the Bible to the everyday life of individual Mennonites, as a source of comedy. Yasch's communicative impulse and his visions are largely based on unconnected biblical passages, which, newly ordered, yield the idea he wishes to convey: the devil in the church.

Except for Yasch himself, who faints after the strain of his performance, nothing of course falls apart as a result of his revelations, contrary to his initial fears. Only in the eyes of Yasch a world has shattered: the world of the Mennonite culture. The following chapters show how the church, tradition and social customs have receded to the background of Yasch's consciousness. He is motivated by materialism, although he doesn't become as extreme a consumer as his neighbours are. The fact that Yasch thinks about allowing his wife to participate in a beauty contest shows to what an extent Mennonite values and moral principles are no longer important to him. The clearest indication of the decreasing influence of the Mennonite world-view on Yasch and his increasing assimilation into the Canadian context is evident in the development of his language. Quickenden also comments on this phenomenon: "(...) most significantly, Yasch's language has settled down. The inversions of syntax, the backbone of German, the startling metaphor, are almost absent."[57]

This is also the sense in which the concept of salvation, which serves as the book's title, can be understood. Yasch is "saved" from the narrow-mindedness of the Mennonite culture which has been so strictly controlled by religious dogmatism. He has become a relatively prosperous man, who thinks rationally and has developed a confident viewpoint. Although Yasch has retained remnants of his earlier roguish nature (as we see in his statement "It's a good thing I'm a Flat German all full with *Wehrlosigkeit* otherwise I would stick these guys with the pitchfork already"[58]) his new status has cost him his former wit and originality.

It is this new perspective that gives *Yasch* his place in "Mennonite literature"; the Mennonite "ethnic group" can no longer find its "ethnicity" in the religious aspect of its culture: to Armin Wiebe, Mennonites are people like Yasch after his salvation. They are members of a religious group which has attained the same degree of secularization as other great confessions have in Western society. Mixed marriages, forgotten customs, false ministers, and

unorthodox interpretations of the Bible are no longer considered to be taboo subjects for Armin Wiebe. On the contrary: those Mennonites in *Yasch*, who are most deeply rooted in the Mennonite tradition, for example Muttachi, are certainly interesting characters, but remain quaint, amusing figures.

The original and authentic language with its extraordinary, imaginative and entertaining metaphors spoken by the characters, also suggests the limitations of the literary work of the book. Unfortunately *Yasch* is considered not only as an *ethnic* novel but as regional fiction, because it is only fully accessible to a "germanophile-anglophile" public. A further limiting factor is the profound knowledge of the Bible which is required of the reader to understand the text, particularly the eighth chapter.

However, from a structural point of view, the novel certainly deserves attention. Armin Wiebe has been successful in his attempts to use the traditional form of the picaresque novel as the framework for the themes of the isolation of the individual in a strict religious setting and the decline—in Weber's terms—of the culture of a sect.

(Translated by Erica Ens and Victor G. Doerksen)

Notes

[1]"Author offends but still sells," rev. *Salvation of Yasch Siemens, Winnipeg Free Press*, (10.7.1984), 31.

[2]This is not to limit Wiebe's freedom in working thematically, but only to point to a lack of unity in the episodes of the novel.

[3]Conversation with David Arnason, May 6, 1987 in Trier.

[4]Claudio Guillen, "Toward a Definition of the Picaresque," *Literature as System*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971), 71-106, p. 79.

[5]A. Wiebe, *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens*, (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1984), p. 97.

[6]Ibid., p. 34.

[7]Guillen, 79-80.

[8]A. Wiebe, p. 31, 32.

[9]Guillen, p. 80.

[10]Ibid., p. 81.

[11]A. Wiebe, p. 113.

[12]*Das Leben des Lazarillo von Tormes* (1554), (Frankfurt M.: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1984), p. 10.

[13]Ibid., p. 25, 26.

[14]Guillen, p. 82.

[15]A. Wiebe, p. 26.

[16]Ibid., p. 143.

[17]Ibid., p. 98.

[18]Ibid., p. 100.

[19]Ibid., p. 117.

[20]Ibid., p. 77.

[21]Guillen, 82.

[22]A. Wiebe, 17-18.

[23]Weber has dealt extensively with the concept of Anabaptism, and also uses the term "sect" to refer to Anabaptists. He defines "sect" as a religious community, which, per se, "must necessarily dispense with universality and be based on the free unification of all members. This is necessary because the sect wants to maintain an aristocratic image: it is an organization of the religiously qualified, not a church as an institution of mercy, which shines its light upon the righteous as well as the unrighteous, with an aim to discipline sinners with God's commandments. The sect has as its ideal the 'ecclesia pura' the visible communion of the saints, from

whose midst the black sheep are removed, so that they might not insult God's view." Max Weber, Die *Protestantische Ethik*. J. Wincelmann (ed.), (Gütersloh: GTB, 1984), 348.

The term "visible communion of the saints" is replaced on another occasion with the expression "communion of the personal believers and born-again Christians." Ibid., p. 157

[24]A. Wiebe, p. 25.

[25]Ibid., p. 48.

[26]Ibid., p. 122, 168.

[27]Ibid., p. 142

[28]Ibid., p. 152.

[29]Ibid., p. 17.

[30]Ibid., p. 16.

[31]Robert Quickenden, "All Connected Up With Everything," rev. *The Salvation of Yasch*, A. Wiebe, *Prairie Fire*, 4,2 (1985), 74-75. 31.

[32]Guillen, p. 83.

[33]Quickenden, p. 73.

[34]Guillen, p. 83, 84.

[35]Ibid., p. 84.

[36]A. Wiebe, p. 108.

[37]Ibid., p. 75.

[38]Ibid., p. 49.

[39]A. Wiebe, p. 124.

[40]Ibid., p. 140.

[41]Ibid., p. 139-140.

[42]Ibid., p. 130.

[43]All quotations: ibid., p. 122-125.

[44]Ibid., p. 126.

[45]Ibid., p. 134.

[46]Ibid., p. 117.

[47]Ibid., p. 122, 126.

[48]These circumstances also have biblical parallels. The devil as the instigator of evil in others is spoken of in 1. Chronicles 21, 1.

[49]A. Wiebe, p. 140.

[50]Ibid., p. 143.

[51]Ibid., p. 121.

[52]Ibid., p. 123.

[53]Ibid., p. 144.

[54]Ibid.

[55]"...there are two balls juggling in the balcony." A. Wiebe, 144. This sentence indicates that biblical motifs can be interpreted in greater depth: in school, Yasch's classmate Emmanuel always juggled three balls, symbolizing the divine trinity. The fact that Emmanuel who appears as a vision on the balcony to Yasch is only juggling two balls, points to the disintegration of the trinity, in other words, Emmanuel has given up one of the components of the trinity. Yasch, in his excitement, is trying to make the congregation see that the Holy Spirit is speaking through him.

A further passage which could be investigated is the sentence "'But I lawve her!'" (Ibid., p. 129) which is spoken by Yasch on the radio, attempting to imitate Yasch. Phonetically and graphemically the word "lawve" is quite similar to the word Yahweh or Jahveh and could be seen as an allusion to the struggle between God and Satan in the person of Forscha.

[56]A. Wiebe, 148.

[57]Quickenden, 75.

[58]A. Wiebe, 163.