The Reading Worlds of Russlaender and Kanadier Mennonites: Print, Libraries, and Readers in the Origins of Mennonite Creative Writing

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In the beginning, before there were readers, there must have been writers. But beyond this distant moment of creation, writers and readers have always depended on each other in subtle ways. Readers need access to books and while writers might favour a large and eager number of readers willing to purchase their works, readers just want access to literature. This need has often been met by the formation of lending libraries. The aim of this paper is to consider Russlaender and some Kanadier communities from the 1920s to the 1950s and their access to the printed word, especially through community libraries.[1] The establishment, building and fate of one Russlaender library in a community in southeastern Manitoba will also be examined in detail. Finally, I will consider the differences and similarities between the reading worlds of some Kanadier and Russlaender Mennonites and the

possible significance of these for the establishment of literary traditions in their successor communities.

From the time of their foundation in Reformation Europe, Mennonites have been an overwhelmingly literate people. As such they have a long and complex history of connections with the written word, especially in the form of books and other printed material. It follows that Mennonites have also been readers. The issue of reading, including access to libraries, has been examined in the case of Amish and other conservative Mennonites, but little has been written on such themes for Mennonites of Prussian and Russian backgrounds.[2] While there are accounts of the publishing ventures of Russian Mennonites and an extensive literature on writers who emerged from this tradition, little research has been carried out on Mennonite readers or Mennonite libraries.[3] The sociologist E.K. Francis, who carried out research among Manitoba Mennonites after the Second World War, noted several "fine book collections" in Mennonite homes that "included many rare items dealing with Mennonitism," but he does not mention the existence of community libraries.[4]

Mennonite Libraries in the Old World

The idea of community and congregational libraries has a long history among some Mennonites, especially those in the Dutch Republic and in areas of northern Germany. The collections tended to be located in urban congregations, often in churches as in Altona and Danzig, although the Amsterdam congregational collection was relocated to their seminary in the eighteenth century.[5] The idea of libraries was certainly not new to the Mennonite refugees who arrived in Canada from the Soviet Union in the 1920s; in pre-revolutionary Russia a variety of libraries had existed. The earliest record of a Mennonite library in Russia appears to be the lending library established in the 1840s in Ohrloff, in the Molochna colony, by the reformer Johann Cornies, although the initiative was not sustained after his death in 1848.[6]

It is unclear what influence these early ventures had on the immigrants to Manitoba in the 1870s, but for those who remained in Russia congregational collections and community libraries were established in a number of colonies. After 1890 it became increasingly common for schools, especially high schools, to have libraries that were also open to members of the local population. A later writer, however, suggested that these were often "very poor and had little to offer to those who were eager to read good books."[7] While undoubtedly the situation varied from settlement to settlement, after 1900 there were discussions in Mennonite newspapers and journals on the need to improve

libraries. In 1903, for instance, the teacher-preacher and later editor of the Mennonite newspaper *Botschafte*r, David H. Epp, reported that a community lending library in Khortitsa had over 700 volumes and 100 members, with books purchased from Berlin and Moscow. Epp also discussed libraries in Forestry Service camps and reported that other colonies were developing libraries.[8]

By 1900 Mennonites were also publishing books and later journals and newspapers, especially after censorship restrictions were relaxed following the 1905 Revolution and the granting of a constitution that guaranteed a degree of freedom of expression.[9] Printers and publishers flourished, with newspapers and magazines published as well as books and pamphlets. Some publishers also sold other publications: in German imported from Germany, or from Russian publishers in German and Russian. In larger, well-established colonies, book dealers also found a steady living.[10] By 1914 the book world of the Mennonites, combined with increased higher education, created an environment rich in printed matter. It is not surprising therefore that Mennonite writers began to expand their horizons, writing both non-fiction and fiction in the form of stories, novels and plays. Even a Mennonite literary journal was established.[11]

So the Russlaender who migrated to Canada from 1923 onwards, especially the younger members, were well aware of the importance of books, libraries and reading as part of their everyday lives. More importantly, their leaders, eager to maintain the momentum of social and cultural advancement that had been fostered in Russia before 1914, and fearful that the poverty caused by war and emigration might result in cultural loss and decline, considered the re-establishment of a newspaper world (*Der Bote*) to keep the scattered immigrants in touch with the central agencies and each other as a matter of priority for both young and old. Such activity was referred to as "culture-work" (*Kulturarbeit*).[12]

Re-establishing Libraries in the New World

The Board of Colonization set up to assist Mennonite migrants to Canada, or more correctly one of its organizations, the *Zentrale Mennonitisches Immagrantenkomitee* (known by the acronym ZMIK), collected and distributed books practically from its foundation. Between the early 1920s and 1944, when ZMIK closed, almost 9,000 books were distributed to Mennonite communities across Canada.[13] While some may have come from within North America, later books were purchased by ZMIK from publishers and book distributors in Germany. ZMIK negotiated special deals with these organizations in

order to purchase books at a considerable rebate, sometimes up to 50% less than the retail price. In securing books and transporting them to Canada, ZMIK was aided by the *Deutsche Auslands-Institut* (DAI), which had been founded to assist Germans living overseas and the *Volksbund fuer das Deutschtum im Ausland* (VDA), which promoted German culture among such groups.[14] The books were shipped to Canada in crates, sometimes carried free by shipping lines and railway companies, to be distributed to the scattered Russlaender communities through the local agents (*Distriktmaenner*) of the Committee. A small charge was made for some books, usually only a few cents per volume. Religious and Bible study volumes were distributed free to ministers, as were most of the school books probably.[15]

The work of ZMIK was part of a concerted effort to maintain the German language for religious and cultural reasons, to sustain the educational and intellectual needs of the immigrants, and to provide instruction for their children.[16] ZMIK's work in this area, however, was not without controversy. In 1927 "it was discovered that some of the books … contained many undesirable features," so ZMIK asked their representatives in Germany, B. H. Unruh and A. J. Fast in Berlin, to act as "mediators" in the selection of "suitable" books.[17] What was so "undesirable" about the kind of books ZMIK had distributed is unclear, but the objections appear to have come mainly from religious leaders and their concerns were probably not with religious books but with non-religious literature.

The "*Buchfrage*" as the issue was headed in the agendas of meetings, reflects the inherent contradiction that ran through much of Russlaender society and dated back to their time in Russia. The Mennonite "Commonwealth" that the Mennonites had been permitted to create in Imperial Russia established both sacred and secular spheres in their society. As the concerns of the Mennonite Commonwealth developed well beyond the needs of religion, they emphasized ideas of culture and peoplehood in ways similar to the secular nationalism of modern nation states.[18] ZMIK, in its structure and aims, was a largely secular body with precedents in pre-revolutionary Russia, as were other institutions the Russlaender established in Canada. In Russia the institutional structures of the Commonwealth were involved in everything from schools, welfare institutions such as hospitals, a home for the deaf, the aged, orphans, the mentally ill and, most importantly, the alternative service system known as the Forestry Service. These projects were mostly organized, funded and managed through semi-secular boards and committees.

Depending on the nature of the local Russlaender community, the balance between secular and religious concerns after emigration to Canada varied from community to community. This can be seen in how

libraries were established and developed in different communities. Although no extensive research has been carried out on this topic, German books with stamps or inscriptions from various Russlaender communities that have survived, indicate that many communities established libraries and often under the "*Gemeinde,*" meaning the congregation. The libraries appear to have been located mainly in meeting houses rather than in schools, as had been the common practice in Russia. The provincial control of education, with its inspectors and emphasis on English, may have led many new immigrants to think it was more appropriate to house German books for adults and children in their meeting houses rather than in the schoolhouse.[19] In Manitoba, in Mennonite settlements like Glenlea and Springstein, the libraries are described in surviving copies as belonging to the *Gemeinde Bibliothek*. In the important *Schoenwieser* congregation in Winnipeg (today The First Mennonite Church) its extensive library was located in the church, but controlled by the *Jugendverein*.[20]

The Library at Grunthal, Manitoba

Grunthal (it long ago lost its *umlaut*) is one of the older areas of Mennonite settlement, and was once part of the East Reserve pioneered by Mennonites from Russia in the 1870s. Following the First World War, however, the majority of Grunthal's population migrated to Paraguay, and from 1926 their land and properties were settled by Mennonite refugees newly arrived from the Soviet Union. These Russlaender eventually purchased most of the land, and farmed and developed businesses in the service area of the original village, which grew to be at the centre of the community. The Russlaender Elim congregation, established in 1927, was centred on their church building, which was located close to a service area, and it was here that the first library was established around 1930.

The earliest numbered books that have survived of the Grunthal Library are stamped "EGB", which stands for the *Elim Gemeinde Bibliothek* ," and appear to confirm the oral tradition that the library was first located in the church. The initial collection points to a North American origin, and while some were published in Germany, the majority were printed in the United States.[21] Volumes 2 and 28 bear the name of their previous owner: "J. Kirchhofer".[22] A number of the volumes had once been part of the *Vereins Bibliothek* of the Sonnenberg Christian Union in Ohio, and Sonnenberg has a Mennonite community descended from nineteenth-century settlers from Switzerland.[23] It is likely that these volumes were part of a gift of German-language books, probably collected by American Mennonite churches and presented

to Russian Mennonite refugees through the agency of the Mennonite Board of Colonization.[24]

It may well have been the conference debates concerning the suitability of books that eventually led the Grunthal Church Library to be relocated and its affiliation with the church ended. Oral tradition reports objections at the local level from members of the congregational council, but does not mention any wider debate, and there is also no mention of a decision in the minutes of the Elim congregation. Exactly when the event occurred is unclear but it was probably in the early 1930s, as throughout most of the 1930s the Grunthal Library (it dropped the word Gemeinde) had no direct connection with the church. It is reported that the Library was operated from a private home; this may well have occurred at some period, but more reports locate the Library in Julius Klassen's mill, situated at the edge of town. This was an ideal location, as farmers would come into town to have grain made into flour, would also purchase feed, and could then select a book and later return it on the same journey.[25] Klassen's business began in 1935, so there is a potential gap between the Library moving out of the church and into the secular world of the developing town.

Once the Library ended its connection with the church, it assumed a more commercial tone. To borrow a book meant that a charge was made for a set number of days, details of which were displayed on a notice pasted or stamped in each volume. The charges and periods of loan appear to be related to the size of volume, with cheaper, shorter books costing just a few cents for seven days, and the charge rising to five cents for two weeks for larger books. It is unclear if an initial subscription was required as was the case with other private libraries, but oral tradition has it that it was sometimes difficult to get people to return books.[26] Whether or not fines were payable for this is unclear. Even so, in the 1930s with the Depression, cash was hard to come by. Five cents was a large sum to pay to borrow a book, especially if, as some Grunthalers say, some people could "squeeze the beaver to death" (i.e. hold on tightly to even a five cent coin!).

In spite of the Depression, it is clear from the book numbers stamped in the books that the collection continued to grow. The highest number I have located is over 350. Not all the early books from the church collection might have been included in the later library, as two bear the number 54; others may have been removed or been lost. By the 1930s the Russlaender also had more access to books directly from Germany than in the early years of settlement, and ZMIK's activities declined during this period. By the 1930s Russlaender had also established their own printing presses in Canada; as well as founding new newspapers such as *Der Bote*. The Russlaender also took over established newspapers such as the *Mennonitische Rundschau* and the

Steinbach Post. As in Russia, printing newspapers was often combined with printing Mennonite and non-Mennonite books as well as selling books, often imported from abroad.

The most important local reading source for Grunthal in the 1930s was Arnold Dyck's printing and publishing business located in Steinbach, where Dyck published the *Steinbach Post* and printed other material, including his own writings.[27] Not only was Steinbach close to Grunthal (even if its Russlaender showed a disdain for a town they saw as their rival), but a number of Grunthalers also knew Dyck from before emigration. Some were friends, most notably Jacob Block, an ex-school teacher and fellow beekeeper, whom Dyck regularly came to visit. In 1935 Dyck established an important Mennonite literary journal in Steinbach, the *Mennonitische Volkswarte*, which continued as the M*ennonitische Warte* until its early demise in 1938 for lack of funding. In the journal he published his own writings, especially his comic stories of *Koop enn Bua*, and the work of a number of other established and emerging Russlaender writers and artists in Canada. He also included historical accounts, documents and descriptive reports on Mennonites in Russia and elsewhere in North and South America and in Germany.[28] Advertised in practically every volume were books that could be purchased through Dyck's publishing house, including Mennonite books printed in Germany by authors such as Walter Quiring and Heinrich Hayo Schroeder.

Both Quiring and Schroeder were Russian Mennonites living in Germany, who had fallen under the spell of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime; and like many other Russlaender at the time in Canada, Dyck himself believed that the Nazi regime was good for Germany. Schroeder's self-published book on the racial origins and history of the Russian Mennonites was particularly popular, although not many copies have survived into the present.[29] The book was cheap, which indicates either a large print-run – some German repositories indicate that between one and two thousand copies were printed – and/or a subsidy from the government.[30] If there were a subsidy, it would have come from the DAI or VDA, which as the Nazis extended their power over all such institutions after 1933 became important propaganda arms of the party reaching out to Germans living abroad.[31] With the assistance of Dr. Seelheim, the German consul in Winnipeg, books now flowed directly from Germany to Mennonites in Canada from the *Institut* and other sections of Dr Goebbels propaganda empire. [32] Not all the books, however, were pure propaganda; the gifts included works of classical literature, language and even hymnals. Exactly what dubious volumes were removed and destroyed, either by burning (or burying), is still unclear.[33] But one surprising volume that has survived is the first part of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. It must have escaped the inferno, but the

cover has been stripped back to the board and the title page removed. However, glue stains in the shape of the Library's bookplate remain inside the remaining front page.

Just when the library was broken up and some volumes destroyed is also unclear. It is not surprising that once the Second World War broke out and Canada was clearly at war as part of the British Empire, some Grunthalers felt that the contents of their library might compromise their position as "new" immigrants, loyal to the Crown. At first a number of Russlaender in the Grunthal area were excited by the war, as Hitler's Blitzkrieg seemed to sweep all before it. The wilder bachelors and radicals even held a small celebration as France fell, feasting on whisky and Mennonite "caviar" (tins of sardines). But the realities of a long, drawn-out conflict, potential conscription of Mennonites and dubious alliances with the hated Soviet Union and its dictator Stalin– first by Hitler and later by Britain and the United States – may have made Grunthalers reconsider some of the books in their library.[34] Whenever and for whatever reason the Library was broken up and only the surviving volumes taken home by individual Mennonites, there are hints of its earlier existence.

Readers

The catalogue of a library, of course, merely indicates the books available to be read, not what is actually borrowed and read. In the absence of a catalogue or a borrower's register for the Grunthal Library, can we say anything about what Mennonites actually read? Or to put it another way, can we identify their preferences?

The book world Mennonites experienced in late Imperial Russia may provide some clues. The increasing distinction between the secular and sacred aspects of life in Russia is reflected in the recommendations of works to be included in school libraries. These went beyond simple textbooks and works of a religious nature to include classical works of literature in German and Russian, poetry and even play scripts.[35] The last generation of school teachers in Russia was preparing young Mennonites not for a closed-off religious world, but for Mennonites to play their part in Russian society, albeit on Mennonite terms. Mennonites became increasingly aware of the wider world and had been reading newspapers and magazines from the early nineteenth century. As early as the 1830s the Frisian and later *Kleine Gemeinde* minister, Heinrich Balzer, complained that Mennonites had developed a taste for reading papers in order to keep abreast of current events.[36] A survey of newspapers and journals ten years before the outbreak of the First World War detailing the material German colonists, including

Mennonites, subscribed to, indicates the wide range of reading matter. While many sources were religious in nature, the lists also include entertainment and fashion magazines. [37]

There is clear evidence that Mennonites in Russia were also readers of popular fiction. In the 1830s Balzer warned that Mennonites should be "on guard in the selection of … reading material, particularly if the book is nicely made up, and makes a strong appeal to both the converted and the unconverted, be it true or fictitious."[38] A report from the Volga region in the later 1880s reported that local Mennonites possessed libraries containing both fiction and non-fiction, and that they enjoyed novels by such noted writers as Sir Walter Scott, James Fenimore Cooper and Ernst Hoffmann.[39] In 1890 a Mennonite school teacher complained that "absurd books about Indians, war and the deeds of pirates" could be found in many houses These, he claimed, stimulated "youthful fantasies" and encouraged "absurd ideas" that created only "mischief and confusion" in young heads.[40] Writing in the 1970s, one elderly Russlaender woman recalled that before 1914 the Molotchna Halbstadt library contained books by contemporary writers of a religious bent such as Margarete Lenk and Frieda Ufer-Held, as well as Spurgeon's sermons.[41] Another woman from Khortitsa reported that one of the libraries in the colony had a copy of Prince Kropotkin's banned works, which she recalled reading about 1907 or 1908.[42]

With regard to the works in the initial Grunthal Church collection, I suspect that the books were not in great demand by readers. Most were old nineteenth century religious works and are of non-Mennonite, mostly Presbyterian and Lutheran, origin. One volume found in the same box as these books and which apparently was never entered into the collection, was a Seventh Day Adventist version of "world history," written in a prophetic vein.[43]

According to oral tradition male readers were attracted to books and magazines on contemporary affairs, particular those focussed on the "New Germany," and adventure stories, continuing the tradition that went back to Russia. Such tastes are reflected in the collection, including detective stories. Although not represented in surviving volumes, one elderly male resident indicated that his favourite books were the adventure stories of Karl May, which he claimed he read while riding farm machinery. Among May's most popular works were his books on cowboys and Indians, although he had never visited North America. They were also favourites of Adolf Hitler, who "sought solace" in May's work "the way others did in the Bible;" and he also recommended the books to his generals, so that they might learn strategy from the tactical skills and native cunning of the book's main Indian character, Winnetou.[44] I'm sure none of May's Mennonite readers treated his tales with such reverence or thought of translating them into *Blitzkrieg*.

Instead, I was told they were just "a good read". Also of interest are detective stories in cheap editions that reveal a thirst for mystery and adventure already apparent in Russia.

The single surviving English book, John Bloundelle-Burton's *In the Days of Adversity: a Romance*, is also of interest. It most likely entered the collection from one of the younger women who, as in many Russlaender communities in the 1920s and 30s, were sent to work as maids in urban households of the English or people of other wealthy ethnicities in order to earn money to assist their parents in paying off the travel debt (*Reiseschuld*) incurred by emigrating from the Soviet Union to Canada. These young women acquired English faster than most of those who remained in their German and/or Low German-speaking homes, and could often read English novels by the time they returned home. That the book is a romance is also probably significant. Although women probably had little say in the make-up of the collection and no clear evidence exists for differences in readers' tastes by gender, oral tradition has it that women were more likely to read books on religion and romance than males.

Russlaender/Kanadier and German/English

So far this has been a Russlaender story. However, shortly after the Second World War, in 1945/46, an Austrian sociologist, E. K. Francis, conducted a detailed study of Manitoba Mennonites for the Manitoba Historical Society. In his book, published almost a decade later, he noted:

> …as a whole, [Mennonites] were avid readers, although the older folks confined their reading mostly to some German weekly, a church paper, the Bible and a few volumes of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Anabaptist religious literature. Among the middle aged generation, those of the Kanadier group read many English books which they found easier to understand, while those of the Russlaender group were often well acquainted with German classical and modern literature. Mennonite history probably had the widest appeal to Mennonite readers. Next in importance were travel books and non-fiction works of various kinds, while fiction and poetry were more rarely represented in a typical Mennonite library."[45]

In the various surviving manuscripts of his book to be found today in the Manitoba Archives, Francis provided further details. He noted that the choice of literature, especially books, was largely influenced

by teachers and booksellers. D.W. Friesen's bookstore in Altona, in the West Reserve, which "largely monopolizes the German book trade," he noted, "refuses to sell pulp or comics." However, "this kind of literature is being distributed by drug stores, confectioneries and less conscientious booksellers" in areas on the border of the Reserve, such as Winkler. Here one outlet regularly sold 50 copies of "love and movie story magazines," 60 comic books, 30-40 popular science and mechanics magazines, 30 western and detective books and 10 crossword books, but only a few "joke" magazines. Fiction was also purchased, including small "pocket" poetry books.[46]

More detailed analysis was provided by a young postal clerk by the name of Ted Friesen for newspapers and magazines distributed in 1946 by post in Altona, and for Horndean by a school principal by the name of Victor Peters (See Table 1).

Newspapers and Magazines distributed 1946	**Altona** (392 families)	**Horndean** (137 families)
In the English language:		
Daily Winnipeg newspapers	70	
Winnipeg Farmers' Weekly (distributed free)	350	125
Eastern Canadian weekly newspapers	125	
3 Leading American illustrated magazines	38	
4 women's magazines	74	30
1 pulp magazine	1	
4 leading digests and news magazines	60	30
1 Mennonite weekly*	20	50
In the German language:		
Nordwesten	75	15
Steinbach Post	150	55
Bote	25	10
M. Rundschau	45	15
Mennonite church papers	430	
2 American home journals	20	

*The *Altona Echo* was distributed locally in Altona by carrier, not through the post office.

Table 1: Subscriptions to Magazines and Newspapers distributed through the Altona Post Office and in the Horndean area, 1946. (E. K. Francis mss, Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MG 9/ A55/29, Table c31 in the 1947 text; Horndean data from in a chart in MG9/A55 (Box1)).

While he did not differentiate in detail between Kanadier and Russlaender subscribers, Francis' more general comments on the differences between reading populations is significant. Delbert Plett's study of Kanadier (particularly the *Kleine Gemeinde*) publishing confirms that in Canada up to the 1950s most of the books printed by Kanadier were religious works, often reprints of older, established texts, sermons and histories by leading ministers and elders.[47] German was the language of religion and thus of religious printing. On the other hand, by the 1940s many Kanadier had a much longer experience of the English language than Russlaender, and usually without the burdens of a confused cultural identity that many newer immigrants developed with their emphasis on German both for themselves and their children. Educated in English-language schools, as Francis noted, the Kanadier were able to read English sources with greater ease than most Russlaender of that generation. Moreover, in many Russlaender communities the suppression of Low German in favour of High German also limited the ability of younger Russlaender to draw upon the natural interconnections between Low German, English and everyday experience, an advantage that some later Kanadier Mennonite writers would exploit fully.

Before the Russlaender arrived, Kanadier attitudes to books, reading and language varied according to religious affiliation. The very conservative groups restricted access to books that were not religious or from within the Mennonite tradition; they favoured mostly "*Das Buch*" (the Bible) and the established works of the Mennonite tradition (Menno's writings and the *Martyr's Mirror*), but all in German editions. The more progressive groups, however, particularly the Bergthalers and later immigrants from Russia, Prussia and the United States who arrived in Canada before 1914, not only permitted a wider reading of books but also printed works, mostly in German, including a newspaper and regular bulletins containing religious and social news. The arrival of the Russlaender undoubtedly influenced such groups, even if some saw some of their publishing ventures taken over and dominated by the new immigrants. But the attitudes towards High German and English developed in different ways between these Kanadier and Russlaender.

High German and the German culture idolized by many Russlaender and presented to their children born in Canada as an essential racial and cultural experience, was actually of a language, place and history most had never experienced first-hand. High German had essentially been a religious language connected with a Mennonite history beyond the modern German state. The current political and cultural concerns of Germany, as expressed in High German, often proved to be an artificial experience. Encouraged to think of High German and German culture as an essential part of their identity and

tradition, the Russlaender and their children read German books with more than a religious sense of duty.[48] But their reading was achieved with varying degrees of competence, and in many communities Low German remained the language at home and in the local community.

At the same time, the Russlaenders' attitude to English remained ambiguous. As new immigrants desperate to succeed in Canada, they were keen to take full advantage of the economic and cultural opportunities the country had to offer. But this was to be achieved on their terms. They wanted to acquire competence in the English language but also avoid its powerful assimilating influences, especially for their children. This required a sustained campaign in church, home and in reading matter to maintain and even develop competence in the German language, especially among children exposed to English in schools. The benefit of children acquiring English was widely accepted, as it was essential to gain access to the rewards of the larger society. But this was not to be achieved at the expense of German or Mennonite faith and–allegedly – German culture, to which many felt connected by language and blood.

Between English and German

Following the Second World War, the collections of German books in Russlaender libraries and homes in Canada (with their newspapers and journals) found new readers. And so new books were added, as Russian and Prussian Mennonite immigrants from war-torn Europe arrived in Canada. By this time Grunthal's library had been dispersed, but other collections, such as that in the Winnipeg *Schoenwiese* church, expanded to meet the needs of these new, often eager readers. Once the most negative public reactions to Germany eased and the Cold War shifted alliances, making enemies into friends and former allies into potential enemies, some older Russlaender renewed their efforts to promote the German language and German culture while underplaying the racial emphasis of the pre-war Nazi influences. Efforts to maintain the German language, especially among younger Mennonites educated in an English-language environment, were renewed. Special classes for the young outside of school were common, promoting music, drama and other cultural activities with an emphasis on the use of German.

In 1952 a *Mennonitischer Verein zur Pflege der deutschen Muttersprache* was established in Manitoba through the concerted efforts of Gerhard H. Peters, the former principal of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute (MCI) in Gretna.[49] The idea was met with great enthusiasm by many older Russlaender, and soon branches were founded in Mennonite settlement populations from British Columbia to Ontario.[50] In

its stated aims and title, the *Verein* appeared mostly secular, with none of its leaders ordained ministers. But the leaders were careful to play on the connections between German and religion, and the *Verein* soon received support from many Russlaender, and even from some older Kanadier religious leaders eager to retain the association between the faith and the German language.[51] The essential problem of what was to be truly considered as the "*Muttersprache*" of Mennonites – High German or Low German, or even English in some homes – was not initially raised by many Mennonites.[52]

By remaining separate from religious conferences, the organisation's programmes avoided the direct conflict between the secular and religious that had occurred in the pre-war period. This also applied to the issue of where to place a community library and its contents, and so its library was established in Winnipeg in private homes, at first under J. Rempel and later J. Toews.[53] As the *Verein's* aim was to maintain knowledge and use of the German language, German books were ordered from Germany. Although at least the new books in the Library reflected a post-war German culture purged of Nazism, some of the leading members of the Verein, especially in Winnipeg, included individuals who prior to the Second World War had been passionate supporters of the now discredited regime. Some, like Dr Walter Quiring, had actually served in the Nazi wartime administration of conquered eastern lands; on the *Verein's* letterhead he was described as its *Schreiber*/*Schatzmeister*.[54]

In spite of the opening of German language schools, the promotion of a range of cultural activities and its library, the *Verein* found its most passionate supporters among what was essentially a passing generation.[55] Although the *Verein* continued into the 1980s, its last creative production was a volume of collected Mennonite writings in German and Low German.[56] The young, schooled in English, were more attracted to English and English literature than German. But holding on to German-–for religious and cultural reasons–helped to create a confused period between the creative literary printing, writing and reading in German that had occurred predominantly among first generation Russlaender, and a new generation who wished to express themselves in the language of their country, English. Not a single second or third generation Mennonite from Russia raised in Canada made a major contribution to German literature writing in German. But they did in English.

For the writers of Kanadier background the break was probably more connected with changes in their religious tradition based around High German, rather than claims to a cultural tradition and identity associated with the language, as it was for many Russlaender. For younger Kanadier during the 1950 and 60s the key influences involved

a movement into higher education in English and the transformations caused by the impact of evangelical tent missions. The missions finally broke the authority of the conservative *Aeltesters* (bishops) who had clung to the German language and the works of the tradition. Conservatism and fundamentalism reacted and counter-reacted to establish a basis for both a sudden break with established traditions, and the illusion of a continuity of faith. But that is another story.

When the developments in creative Mennonite writing, with a corresponding response from a new generation of Mennonite readers, occurred in the 1970s it came from within sections of both the Kanadier and Russlaender traditions.[57] Even if such terms of distinction between peoples had become largely archaic for that generation of writers, invisible fault lines remained, reflecting a complex past of writers and readers, printing and publishing as well as the influence of libraries in the Mennonite world.

Conclusion

Even if in the distant, primeval act of literary creation writers preceded readers, all subsequent writers were readers long before they attempted to be serious writers. The autobiographies of writers are full of accounts of their reading experiences, books they discovered, texts that influenced them, authors who altered their lives. So understanding the book world of future writers – and the influence of other reading material – is important.

In terms of the flowering of Mennonite writing in modern times the fact that Mennonites have been writers, printers, publishers, as well as builders and users of libraries and keen readers for a long period, including non-religious works, may be of significance. This applies both to the descendants of Russlaender and Kanadier. The singularity of the Mennonite experience can be appreciated when one considers that, at least in Manitoba, it would appear that in some Mennonite communities there was a print-rich culture, perhaps even richer than in some English rural communities, before and after the Russlaender arrived to accelerate the process of writing and reading. In 1946, at the same time E. K. Francis was writing his comments on the reading worlds of the Kanadier and Russlaender, another sociologist, P. James Giffen, was conducting research on adult education in predominantly English and Ukrainian rural areas of Manitoba. In his report he constantly details the lack of reading matter, the shortage of libraries or the failure of people to use what sources were available. He notes only one large private collection.[58] But the print-rich world of Mennonites and the emergence of Mennonite writers appear to be closely related.

Appendix: Surviving Volumes of the Grunthal Library

Stamped EGB [Elim Gemeinde Bibliothek]

#1 Friedrich Zündel, *Pfarrer Johann Christoph Blumenhardt: ein Lebensbild*. Zürich: Höhr, 1833.

#2 Karl Ernst Bock, *Das Buch vom gesunden und kranken Menschen*. Leipzig: Keil, 1875.

#10 Philipp Doddridge, *Anfang und Fortgang des geistlichen Lebens in der menschlichen Seele*. New York Amerikanische Traktat-Gesellschaft [1860].

#15 Friedrich Arndt, *Werth der Bibel*. New York: Amerikanischen Traktatgesellschaft [n.d.].

19 S. Green, *Bible Sketches and their Teachings for Young People*. Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board, 1868.

#28 *Die Biblischen Alterhuemer*. Stuttgart: J. J. Steinkopf, n.d.

#39 *Erfahrungen eines jungen Predigers, oder: Umsonst habt ihr es empfangen, umsonst gebt es auch*! New-York : Amerikanische Traktat-Gesellschaft, n.d. [Juvenile Fiction]

#54 Richard Baron, *Durch Nacht zum Licht: Erzählung*. Philadelphia: Morwitz & Co., [n.d.] Amerikanische Jugendbibliothek [Children's literature]

#57 W. F. Schneider, *Des Knaben eigener Wegweiser*. Cleveland, Ohio: Schneider, 1876.

Stamped directly or with printed plates stating Grunthal Bibliothek [with loan charges and loan period included usually in hand]

#20 Verband Deutsche Verein im Ausland, *Wir Deutsche in der Welt*. Berlin: NSDAP, 1930.

23 Pitt Strong, *Das Geheimnis von St Denis*. Heidenaus bei Dresden Verlagshaus Freya, 19? (Tom Shark, der König der Detektive, no.103)

#54 John Bloundelle-Burton, *In the Days of Adversity: a Romance*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896.

#154 N. Tolstoi, *Wodurch leben die Menschen: Zwei Erzaehlungen*. Wiesbaden: Verlag des Volksbildungsverein, 1924.

#189 Walter Blankenburg ed., *Klingend Erbe. Liederbuch fuer Schule und Haus*. Kassel: Baerenreiter-Verlag, 1936.

#193 Marie Hamsun, *Die Langerudkinder: Erzaehlung*. Munich: Albert Langen/ Georg Mueller, 1927.

#209 Edwin Erich Dwinger, *Zwischen Weiss und Rot*. Jena: Diederichs, 1930.

#210 Erika Müller-Hennig, *Abenteuer um Saratow*. Berlin : Junge Generation Verlag, 1936 [Children's story set in Russian colonies]

#221 Werner von der, Schulenburg, *Zaungast der Weltgeschichte*. Leipzig: Schmidt & Spring, [1936]. [World history from a Nazi perspective].

#225 Dietrich Rich, *Kriegs Schule Toledo. Des jungen Spaniens Heldenkampf vom Akazar*' Leipzig: Kehler &Amelang [1937].

#241 Carl, Hagenbeck, *Von Tieren und Menschen: Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen*. Leipzig: P. List, c. 1930.

#256 Axel von Graef, *Männer unterm spaten*. Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut A.G., 1936. [On the German Reichsarbeitsdienst].

#273 Alexander Dumas, *Die drei Musketiere: Historischer Roman*. Berlin: Schreitersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, c. 1920.

#292 William Schoeler, *Cavalier der Kamisardenheld; eine historische Erzählung aus der Hugenottenzeit*. Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern [1919].

#326B , Frank Carlsen, *Schwester Alexe: Roman*. Reutlingen: Ensslin & Laiblin, [19]25.

#349 Alexandre Dumas, *Ange Pitou*. Berlin: Weichert, [1937].

#352 Friedrich Gerstaecker, *Germelshausen*, Edited with Notes and Vocabulary by Orlando F. Lewis .. Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1902.

Probable books

(These books have the glue marks in the shape of the pasted Library plates and/or traces of the plate or stamp, but no surviving numbers.)

Gustav Bieritz, *Des Koenigs Leibwache: Eine Erzaehlung*. Konstanz: Christlicher Buch- und Kunstverlag, nd [for young readers].

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf. Erste Band. Ein Abrechnung*. Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 193? [Cover ripped back to board and title page missing.]

W. O. Horn, *Die letzte Ghazwah im Sudan unter der Regierung Mehemed Alis von Aegypten: Erzaehlung fuer Jugend und das Volk*. Reutlingen: Ensslin und Laiblin, n.d.

Die *Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Russland während der Kriegs- und Revolutionsjahre 1914 bis 1920*. Heilbronn am Neckar: Kommissions-Verlag der Mennon. Fluechtlingsfürsorge, 1921

J. H. Janzen, *Utwaundre: Stimmungsbild in zwei Aufzuegen* (Zweite Auflage). Waterloo, Ontario, the Author, 1931.[Low German play text].

Josephine Siebe, *Oberheudorfer Buben- und Maedelgeschichten*. Stuttgart: Herold Verlag, 1937.

Gerhard Toews (Georg de Brecht), *Die Heimat in Truemmern: Deutsche Schicksale im Russland derAnarchie*. Steinbach: Warte Verlag, 1936.

Notes

1 The distinction between Russlaender and Kanadier during this period basically was that Russlaender were refugees from the Soviet Union who mostly arrived in Canada the 1920s and the Kanadier were mostly those immigrants and their descendants who had arrived before 1914, the vast majority of whom had arrived in Manitoba in the 1870s. There was an earlier use of this distinction which no longer was of significance in the period considered.

2 On reading see Margaret Anne Jones, "Reading among the Amish," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 22 (1948), 450-51; Laura Weaver, "'Plain' and 'fancy' Laura: A Mennonite reader of girls' books," *Children's Literature*, 16 (1988), 185-90; on Amish use of library services, see for example Gayle, Patton, "Plain and simple pleasures: Bookmobile service in Amish country," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, 68 (1994), 1-5; Monica St Clair, "Recent findings on library usage among the Amish," *Rural Libraries*, 25 (2005), 43-55; Margaret Perkins, "Library services to Amish communities."*Bookmoblies Outreach Services*, 6 (2003), 53-78.

3 These groups, however, have been considered in the larger context of Mennonites in Canada: see Hildi Froese Tiessen, "Reading and publishing in Mennonite communities" In Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming, and Fiona A. Black eds, *History of the Book in Canada: Volume 2: 1840-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 369-72; 548-49.

4 E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: the Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona: D.W. Friesen, 1955), 270. In the various manuscript versions of his text in the Archives of Manitoba Francis mentions libraries ranging from 10 to 100 books and three extensive collections, one religious, one on German literature and one on sociology and economics; the latter is probably that of J. J. Siemens, who helped establish the co-operative movement on the Manitoba Mennonite West Reserve, Francis mss MG55/26.

5 Bender, Harold S. and Nelson P. Springer, "Historical Libraries," *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, 1989 (Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online); retrieved 03 August 2009 <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/H592ME.html>

6 David H. Epp, *Johann Cornies* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1995 [originally Berdiansk, 1909]), 71; when discussing Cornies' venture, Epp also comments on the situation in Russia in 1909, 72.

7 Gerhard Wiens, "Russo-German Bilingualism: A Case Study," *Modern Language Journal*, 36 (1952), 394.

8 [David H. Epp], "Ein wesentliches Mittel zur Fortbildung der Jugend wie zur Volksbildung ueberhaupt sind ohne Zweifel gut gewaehlte: Bibliotheken." *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch(MJ)*, 1903, 73-74; the Molochna Mennonite Teacher's Union approved a list of class level texts for school librarians, "An die Herren Sonderbibliothekare," *Friedensstimme*, 78 (6 October 1912), 4.

9 See the discussion by Al Reimer, "The Print Culture of the Russian Mennonites," in John Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989), 221-37; prior to this Mennonites in Russia had subscribed to the newspaper of the German colonists, the *Odessaer Zeitung,* and to the American *Mennonitische Rundschau*, which for a period even published a special edition to be sent to Russian readers.

10 See the printer-publisher H .J. Braun's Halbstadt, Molochna catalogue of 1906 in "Beilage zu "Friedensstimme", *Friedensstimme* (31 July/5 August); this became the publishing house of Raduga (Rainbow). Other catalogues appeared in various newspaper and as calendar advertisements; those in the *MJ* include H. A. Ediger (Berdiansk), Franz J. Goossen (Gnadenfeld, Molochna), H. Lenzmann (Gross Tokmak, the Russian/Ukrainian settlement close to Molochna) and non-Mennonites including Gottlieb Schaad (Prischib - the German colonist's town close to Halbstadt) and the German "Christian Publishing House" of Wiegand & Co..

11 Reimer, "The Print Culture of the Russian Mennonites."

12 On *Kulturarbeit* see the Protokoll in *Die Vertretervesammlung in Herbert, Sask. vom 11. bis 13 Dezember 1928*, 3 (Printed copy in ZMIK Files, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Vol 1155).

13 Dietrich H. Epp, "1923-1948: Das Zentrale Mennonitische Immigrantenkomitee" *Der Bote*, 30 (28 July 1948), 3; the exact categories were Bible history (1557), Fibel and reading books (6228), song books (287), reference works for libraries (350), "various" 231; the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* gives a figure of "over 12, 000", Cornelius Krahn, "Central Mennonite Immigration Committee", *ME* 2, 543.

14 The VDA also supplied books directly on request as it did in the 1920s to two Mennonite Rempel brothers in Hanley, Saskatchewan who eventually established a German library with their books in 1929:see Grant Grams, *German Emigration to Canada and the Support of its Deutschtum during the Weimar Republic: the Role of the Deutsches Ausland-Institut. Verein far das Deutschtum im Ausland and German-Canadian Organisations* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 226-27.

15 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 209, writes that Langermann and Widermann's Bible stories were distributed along with "ten copies of C. H. Spurgeon's *Evangelium fuer allerlei Volk*", mainly for ministers.

16 Esther Epp-Tiessen, *J. J. Thiessen: a Leader for His Time* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 2001), 102 reports that J. J. Thiessen who worked for ZMIK "distributed small libraries of German language and religious books (ordered through contacts in Germany) to help groups nurture their language and faith."

17 Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, 209.

18 On the idea of a Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia, see E, K. Francis, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia, 1789-1914: A Sociological Interpretation," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 25 (1951), 173-182 and James Urry, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Imperial Russia Revisited," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 84 (2010), 227-47.

[19] In the early 1970s Victor D. Kliewer, collecting material for his thesis, looked at the German books in some congregational libraries and was surprised by an absence of Mennonite books, religious or historical, as well as by the presence of novels and children's stories from outside the Mennonite world. These libraries, however, were meant to serve wider community needs rather than just the church. See Victor D. Kliewer, "The German Literature of the Russian Mennonites: a Critical Bibliography of Writings Located in Manitoba Libraries," MA thesis, University of Mantoba, 1972, 257.

[20] The Glenlea books are inscribed "Gemeindeeigentum der Bibliothek zu Glenlea"; I am grateful to Harold Peters-Franson for giving me access to the remains of the German library at the First Mennonite church, and to Ingrid Moehlmann for first drawing my attention to the collection.

[21] One has a notice of the noted booksellers and printers Schafer and Koradi in Philadelphia.

[22] Kirchhofer's address is given in one book as of "Dalton, O, Sept. 21 1876". This is probably Jakob Kirchhofer, a Mennonite who died in Dalton aged 46 in 1894; see his obituary in *Christlicher Bundesbote* 16 August, 1894, 8.

[23] In the early 1930s the Sonnenberg church suffered a schism between conservatives and liberals and among the issues involved were the persistence of German, and the existence of literary societies and church libraries, Paul Toews, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970: Modernity and the Persistence of Religious Community* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1996), 46.

[24] First Mennonite (Schoenwiese) Church in Winnipeg has a few similar volumes but from Kansas, suggesting they arrived and were distributed in lots.

[25] In other rural areas of Manitoba libraries were linked to the Pool and located near elevators, see P. James Giffen, *Rural Life: Portraits of the Prairie Town, 1946*, ed., with an afterword by Gerald Friesen (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2004), 36.

[26] Such subscription libraries that also charged for the borrowing of each book were common in urban areas of Britain and Canada, the best known being that run by the pharmacy company Boots in Britain, but were gradually superseded by free public libraries see Lorne Bruce and Elizabeth Hanson, "The Rise of the Public Library in English Canada," in Carole Gerson and Jacques Michon, eds., *History of the Book in Canada: Volume 3: 1918-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 429-35.

[27] The *Post* Dyck hoped would rival the other major immigrant newspapers, the *Bote* and *Rundschau,* but it already had an established readership who were mostly Kanadier; Gerhard Derksen, to whom Dyck sold his Steinbach business and who was more of a businessman, developed and expanded the paper's existing readership.

[28] See Dyck's detailed ten-page printed flyer issued in 1934 to launch the journal, where he clearly sets out the categories and contents he wished to promote: "Was will die Mennonitische Volkswarte?" a copy of which is in the J. J. Hildebrand Papers in the MHC, Vol 2821.

[29] Heinrich H. Schroeder, *Russlanddeutsche Friesen* (Döllstädt-Langensalza: Selbstverlag, 1936); the main page, with a picture of Schroeder in a Nazi uniform with swastika armband, may have later made the volume seem unsafe. Schroeder also published two other works, one about the fate of Mennonites in the Russian revolution (*Die systematische Vernichtung der Russland-Deutschen*. Langensalza; Berlin; Leipzig: Beltz, [1934]); and a book on schooling with references to Mennonite schools in Canada and South America (*Auslanddeutschtum in der Volksschule*. Langensalza, Berlin, Leipzig: Beltz, [1934]). Schroeder disappeared in Germany at the end of World War Two and his fate is unknown.

[30] After the war, the Allied governments ordered that most Nazi books be removed from general German libraries; all of Schroeder's books are listed under the Soviet

books to be removed: *Deutsche Verwaltung für Volksbildung in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone, Liste der auszusondernden Literatur* (Berlin: Zentralverlag, 1946) available at http://www.polunbi.de/bibliothek/1946-nslit.html)

[31] See Katja Gesche, *Kultur als Instrument der Aussenpolitik totalitärer Staaten. Das Deutsche Ausland-Institut 1933-1945* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2006).

[32] Jonathan F. Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 44; Wagner, *A History of Migration from Germany to Canada, 1850-1939* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 209, also reports that the VDA supplied the Mennonite Coaldale community with 165 books for its library in 1935.

[33] One can only speculate about the kinds of books destroyed, but copies of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* were circulating in the Russlaender community, First Mennonite's German Library in Winnipeg still has a copy of Hanns Heinz Ewers' biography of Horst Wessel, a Nazi "hero" from the party's early days (published in 1933), and a practical handbook to train youth in Hitler Jugend-type organizations (Heinz Schaefer ed., *Der Heimabend* (2nd edition Potsdam: Ludwig Voggenreiter Verlag, 1934).

[34] The RCMP arrested a Mennonite on the West Reserve for boasting about Hitler, and for possessing a copy of *Mein Kampf* and a short-wave radio; one Russlaender teacher was dismissed and his licence revoked and others followed later; the people in Grunthal would have been aware of these events.

[35] Before 1914 even Gogol's plays were staged in the higher schools, although the issue of theatrical productions did encounter opposition from some religious groups and leaders: see James Urry, "Growing up with Cities: The Mennonite Experience in Imperial Russia and the Early Soviet Union," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 20 (2002), 140-41.

[36] Heinrich Balzer, "Faith and Reason: The Principles of Mennonitism Reconsidered, in a Treatise of 1833," trans., Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 22 (1948), 89-90, 93.

[37] Reimer, "The Print Culture of the Russian Mennonites", 236, ft. 36.

[38] Balzer, "Faith and Reason", 93.

[39] *Odessaer Zeitung*, 283, (December 16/28 1889) quoted in Reimer, "The Print Culture of the Russian Mennonites", 235, ft.13.

[40] Peter Klassen, "Ueber Jugendlectuere und Schuelerbibliotheken," *Odessaer Zeitiung*, 214 (22 Sept/4 Oct. 1890), 2.

[41] M. Kroeker, "Zu 'Dorfbibliotheken' von J. P. Dyck," *Bote,* 21 (2 February 1971), 6; there is a discussion about the extent and nature of libraries in Russia in *Bote* at this period..

[42] Maria Siemens, "Zu 'Pflueget ein Neues' von Gerhard Lohrenz,' *Bote*, 23 (30 May 1972), 11.

[43] E. G. White, *Der grosse Kampf zwischen Christus und Satan während des christlichen Zeitalters* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing, ca. 1900). If it was considered unsuitable reading matter it was however still kept in the church, as it was discovered with the other early volumes of the Library and contains a typed slip commenting on the text's brief discussion of the Mennonite's Anabaptist forefathers. Another volume bearing the stamp of the Sonnenberg Library also has no Library stamp: Karl Wagner-Groben, *Himmlisches Licht ins irdische Dunkel: Zeugnisse von Gottes Gnadenführungen mit seinen Kindern* (Basel: Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, 1888).

[44] Timothy W. Ryback, *Hitler's Private Library: the Books that Shaped his Life* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 179-80.

[45] Francis, *In Search of Utopia*, 270

[46] E.K. Francis unpublished drafts for "In Search of Utopia." Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MG55/26 (1951 version of text) pp 616-17; the 1947/48 text is essentially the same.

47 Delbert F. Plett, "Print Culture of the East Reserve, 1874-1930," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 68, 1994, 524-50. Also in John Dyck ed., *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve, 1874-1930* (Steinbach: The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 1994), 686-714, East Reserve Historical Series, no. 3.

48 A number of the surviving volumes from the Grunthal Library are children's books, but they may have survived due to continued concerns with maintaining German among the young rather than the nature of the overall collection as such.

49 On Peters and the circumstances of his leaving the MCI in 1948 see T.D. Regehr, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 254.

50 The title of the organization appears to have changed from time to time including *Mennonitscher Verein "Deutsche Muttersprache*." The extensive files of this organisation that existed into the 1980s are deposited in the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg,.4146-4149; it contains a file on the Library, 4147 folder 7.

51 The founding principles with a letter from the teacher Gerhard Peters requesting support from elders and leaders of the Mennonite communities across Canada, with other material, is in the Board of Colonization files, Mennonite Heritage Centre, 1334 (1020).

52 Although C. F. Klassen did raise this matter in a letter to Peters in May 1953, MHC Archives, Mennonite German Society MHC 4147, file 14; this issue, so close to Arnold Dyck in the 1930s, was later to be revived in the writings of Reuben Epp, Al Reimer and Jack Thiessen, to name but a few.

53 Books with the bookplate of the Verein and its rules have survived in a number of libraries, including that of the First Mennonite in Winnipeg, where the first meetings of the Verein took place. Toews would sometimes note new accessions to the Library in *Der Bote*.

54 On Quiring see T.D. Regehr, "Walter Quiring: Historian and Propagandist 1893-1983," in Harry Loewen, ed., *Shepherds, Servants and Prophets: Leadership Among the Russian Mennonites*, ca. 1880-1960 (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2003), 315-35.

55 In their submission to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1964, the leaders of the Verein claim it was founded with the "aim ... to help young Mennonites to become real bilingual Canadians". By bilingualism they meant not just English and a second language but the "chosen" language of their "cultural heritage - the German language" (Copy of their Submission in the Library of the University of Winnipeg).

56 George K. Epp and Heinrich Wiebe, collector and ed., *Unter dem Nordlicht Anthologie des deutschen Schrifttums der Mennoniten in Canada* (Winnipeg: The Mennonite German Society of Canada, 1977).

57 In many ways this points to the singularity of Rudy Wiebe who emerged a decade earlier as a writer; but then he came from Alberta, from a Russlaender tradition that had not closely interacted with Mennonites of "other" traditions.

58 Giffen, *Rural Life*, 36, 45,50-51, 67,115-16, 133,163, 190-91, 227; Giffen also noted the lack of good bookshops in Winnipeg, 230. An earlier draft report for the Economic Survey Board of Manitoba, had described the public library resources of the Province as "deplorable", Thomas C. Knight, *Interim Report and Findings of the Economic Survey Board of Manitoba* (Winnipeg: The Province of Manitoba, 1938), Volume 2, 348.