

The Boundary between "Us" and "Them"  
Readers and the non-English word  
in the fiction of Canadian Mennonite Writers

by

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## Abstract

This study asks whether the use of non-English words in the novels of Canadian Mennonites perpetuates a cultural binary, and concludes that it does not. The use of the non-English word, rather than enforcing a binary between "us and them", ultimately reveals that cultural boundaries are permeable and unstable. Recent reader-response theory, which sees the reader as always influenced by a context, is central to this inquiry. Analysis of readers' responses in the form of questionnaires constitutes part of the support for my assertions, while an examination of typography, orthography, interlanguage, and theme in three novels by Canadian Mennonites provides the balance.

Chapter one lays the theoretical framework for the investigation. It discusses: reader-response theory and the impossibility of accessing a stable textual meaning coincidental with the author's intention, the challenge of the non-English word to the concept of universality, and the distinction between proper "English" and non-institutional "english". Chapter two examines some readers' responses to non-English words and finds that "inside" readers have interpretations in common with "outside" readers, and that variations exist between the interpretations of "inside" readers. A binary model is too simplistic to encompass the range of contexts from which readers read. Chapter three discusses typography, orthography, and interlanguage in relation to (Low) German, and suggests the importance of these features to a discussion of the texts. Chapters four through six examine Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), Anne Konrad's *The Blue*

*Jar* (1985), and Armin Wiebe's *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens* (1984) respectively. Each novel's thematic concern with cultural boundaries serves as a framework for interpreting its physical and linguistic features. Chapter seven concludes by examining the influence of my own fragmented identity on the development of my argument, and revisits the issue of authorial intent in our politically less-than-perfect world. A lengthy appendix serves as a pluralistic glossary to the texts, and contains the responses to my questionnaires. A brief section outlines some of the Appendix's interesting patterns and trends. An index to the appendix is provided since the appendix is not arranged alphabetically.

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## 1: Reader-response Theory and the Non-English word

W.J. Keith, in a discussion of non-English words in Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China*, observes: "One should...have faith that if Wiebe (or any other responsible writer) [feels] that the meaning of any word [is] essential, it ...[will be]...explained in some way" (Keith, "Where" 96). Keith's comments reveal a belief that a "responsible" author makes a contract with the reader; he or she promises to make his or her "meaning" accessible, ready to be discovered. This belief assumes first of all that a text has some objective, stable meaning; and second, that this meaning is somehow related to (or coincidental with) the author's intentions. Keith, in his discussion of his reaction to non-English words in Wiebe's novel, is responding to an argument made by Hildi Froese Tiessen that foreign words in the literature written by Canadian Mennonites constitute a boundary that alienates "outside readers" (Tiessen, "Stranger" 50).<sup>1</sup> Keith and Tiessen disagree about whether a knowledge of German and/or Low German is essential to an understanding of the "meaning" of the texts in which words in these languages appear. In other words, are the texts "accessible"? Keith rejects the suggestion that Wiebe would write a text which is not "universal" (universally accessible to everyone). Even if Wiebe intended to write a universally accessible text, however, (which is a reasonable assumption according to Penelope Van Toorn's persuasive argument in "Rudy Wiebe and the Historicity of the

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<sup>1</sup> She expands this argument in "Mother Tongue as Shibboleth in the Literature of Canadian Mennonites." The second article is the one to which Keith is specifically responding.

Word"), it does not mean that Rudy Wiebe's intended message (evangelical or otherwise) will be understood by all readers.

Keith's essay is marked by the interests of reader-response criticism. Reader-response criticism is "a term that has come to be associated with the works of critics who use the words *reader*, *the reading process*, and *response* to mark out an area of investigation" (Tompkins ix). Keith frames the debate between himself and Tiessen in terms of reader-response. In reference to Tiessen's argument that Mennonites have traditionally used language "to effect separation from and nonconformity to the world" (Tiessen "Shibboleth" 182), Keith comments:

Now I have no wish to dispute that argument. It seems to me a perfectly valid point to make--and an extremely interesting one so far as I am concerned, since I hadn't thought of the matter in these terms. But I do feel the need to observe that this argument itself represents a decidedly Mennonite perspective (and is valuable because of this). As a non-Mennonite, however, I look at the matter very differently. ("Where" 95)

I find this exchange intriguing enough to refer to it at some length. Keith's reader-response strategy sets up an "us and them" binary between himself and Tiessen; this binary is precisely what Tiessen proposes that Mennonite writers are perpetuating in their use of non-English words (Tiessen, "Stranger" 50). Presumably, a non-Mennonite could assign the same significance to non-English words in these texts as Tiessen has. The fact that Mennonites have traditionally used language as a barrier is clearly explained and dramatized in Rudy Wiebe's novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962).



Although Tiessen's reading is influenced by her cultural background, no essential ethnic component controls and creates Tiessen's reading of the text. Keith is arguing that both Mennonites and non-Mennonites have equal access to the "meaning" of the text, but at the same time he is making a gesture toward Tiessen's "Mennoniteness", her ethnicity, and therefore distinguishing her interpretation on this basis.

On the topic of the binary component in ethnic identity, Irene Portis Winner states:

Ethnic identity arises from the universal situation that cultures are not isolated. They are either pluralistic, composed of ever-changing interrelated subcultures, or at least they are in contact with other cultural groups. The members of a particular culture or subculture consider themselves as "We" as opposed to, and differentiated from, the "other". Thus an ethnic group exists only in opposition to some other ethnic group. (412)

Winner's point that cultures are composed of "pluralistic ever-changing interrelated subcultures" emphasizes that although members of a group see themselves as defined by their differentiation from members of another group, relationships are always changing. No essential<sup>2</sup> difference exists between ethnic groups; ethnicity is a cultural construction. "Ethnic" is usually defined as being in contrast to a dominant culture. The dominant culture sees itself

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<sup>2</sup> I use "essential" as an antonym to "constructed". Essential as essence.

and its values as "universal".<sup>3</sup> When it comes to a discussion of literature, "ethnic literature" is often seen as being in opposition to "mainstream literature". But mainstream literature is, of course, ethnic literature as well. Perhaps in response to this social and economic pressure, reviewers of Mennonite writers sometimes find it necessary to assert that the texts they are reviewing are "universal".<sup>4</sup>

Early reader-response theorists like Stanley Fish, for example, thought that criticism should focus on the reading experience. But he posited a reader who reads according to a particular set of codes which Fish sees as universal: "*the reader reacts to the words on the page in one way rather than another because he operates according to the same set of rules that the author used to generate them [my italics]*" (Tompkins xvii). The non-English word, however, foregrounds the fact that authors and readers cannot wholly operate according to the same sets of codes. In "Literature in the Reader", Fish talks about the application of his theories in the classroom; he teaches his students "to recognize and discount what is idiosyncratic in their own responses" (Fish 99). The idiosyncrasies of an individual response, however, are an expression of the context of the reader.

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<sup>3</sup> From the *Oxford English Dictionary*, meaning 3.a.: "Of or pertaining to the universe in general or all things in it; existing or occurring everywhere or in all things; occas., of or belonging to all nature."

<sup>4</sup> For example: "Thus a narrative poem like Patrick Friesen's *The Shunning* has as its theme a particular Mennonite belief practice, but its appeal is universal" (Loewen, "Witness" 113). Peter Pauls' review of another Friesen volume makes the same claim: "In *Unearthly Horses* Friesen describes his own personal spiritual journey but it is one that is also universal" (166).

The use of non-English words in Mennonite writing draws attention to the context of the reader's ethnicity because the form of Low German called "Plautdietsch" is closely associated with a particular ethnic group, the Mennonites; the reader is unlikely to know the language through scholarship although he or she may know High German.<sup>5</sup> As Harry Loewen writes in his article about the reception of Mennonite literature, "It goes without saying that the reception and interpretation of Canadian-Mennonite literature varies, depending in part on the background from which the critic is writing" (Loewen, "Mennonite Literature" 126).

Jane Tompkins' excellent introduction to reader-response criticism traces a chronological movement. The movement begins with a critical interest in a reader's interaction with a meaning which is present in the text, and develops into the critical position which asserts that meaning resides with the reader, or that the reader creates the text by reading. Keith and Tiessen both work from the position which posits the author's intentions as the repository of a text's meaning. If this position is abandoned in favour of the later developments in reader-response criticism, however, a more interesting exploration of the significance of non-English words is possible.<sup>6</sup> Walter Benn Michaels' article "The

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<sup>5</sup> However, a course in Low German exists at the University of Winnipeg. Also, I do not mean to suggest that to be Mennonite you must speak Plautdietsch (Low German). See *Why I am a Mennonite* for a range of opinions on this issue.

<sup>6</sup> Logocentrism "involves the belief that sounds are simply a representation of meanings which are present in the consciousness of the speaker. The signifier is but a temporary representation through which one moves to get at the signified....And the written word is an even more derivative and imperfect form: it is the representation of a sound sequence which is itself a representation (continued...)"

Interpreter's Self: Peirce on the Cartesian 'Subject'" discusses why abandoning the pose of neutrality in interpretation does not release anarchy in the realm of criticism. He shows that "since the self is already an interpretation as well as an interpreter, it is not radically free...to impose its own meanings on any and all texts (Tompkins xxiv). The self is not "free to assert its subjectivity" (Michaels 198). Michaels sees the illusion of objective neutrality or free subjectivity as "simply the flip sides of the context-free self, active and passive; one generates any interpretation it pleases, the other denies that it interprets at all" (199) He goes on to say:

...the self is already embedded in a context, the community of interpretation or system of signs. The rhetoric of the community of interpretation emphasizes the role readers play in constituting texts, while the rhetoric of the self as sign in a system of signs emphasizes the role texts play in constituting consciousness--the strategy in each case is to collapse the distinction between the interpreter and what he interprets....The most we can say is that we can choose our interpretations but we can't choose our range of choices.  
(199)

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<sup>6</sup>(...continued)  
of the thought. Interpretation by this model, is a nostalgic and retrospective process, an attempt to recover the concepts which were present to the consciousness of the speaker or writer at the time of writing. And of course for logocentrism, as indeed is the case with Saussure, the sign is the fundamental unit; phonemes and letters are simply convenient devices which in combination can be used to represent the essence of the sign, which is the signified ....meaning should not be something that we simply recover but something that we produce or create; interpretation should transform the world, not merely attempt to recover a past...." (Culler, Saussure 109).

In other words, we interpret the texts in a particular way because of our contexts: we are never freely independent readers. The text also constitutes how we look at our self as a sign. Do we think of ourselves as "outsiders" or "insiders"? The non-English word foregrounds the necessity for examining the context of the reader. Similar interpretations of texts exist because some people learn to read and interpret literature according to similar codes: they read from similar contexts. A reader's context is clearly the key to his or her interpretation of non-English words, in matters of meaning and of significance; a reader's context is therefore the key to his or her interpretation of the text.

The concept of ethnicity is a cultural construction. Winner explains that ethnic identity is based on a binary between "we" and "they". But she also points out that relationships are always changing. The boundaries between different cultures and subcultures are permeable and unstable. A collection like *Why I am a Mennonite* illustrates the range of opinions about the category "Mennonite" and who belongs in it. Tensions exist in the group between those who see "Mennonite" as a primarily ethnic category and those who see it as a religious category (or want to revolutionize it so that it will be one). Historically, it was of utmost importance for Mennonites to maintain a distance between themselves and the outside world to avoid corruption and "worldliness".<sup>7</sup> Language is a key site of theological upheaval; it is a battleground for resisting assimilation. German was used

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<sup>7</sup> But linguistic differences also prohibited the conversion of the people in the surrounding cultures to Christianity, or to Mennonite doctrine. This tension is dramatized in Wiebe's first novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many*.

as a barrier to keep Mennonites separate from the culture around them. The fact that "cultures are not isolated" (Winner 412) means that separatism must be used as a conscious strategy to prevent assimilation, or, for the more fundamentalist groups of Mennonites, as a strategy to avoid contamination from more liberal Mennonites. The differences between the Kanadier<sup>8</sup> (Mennonites who immigrated to North America before 1900) and Russländer (Mennonites who immigrated later) are of this kind. The differences between these two groups is also a linguistic one as my relatives and parents have pointed out, and as Rudy Wiebe has illustrated in *The Blue Mountains of China*. Keith regards the non-English word as "a mysterious sign that establishes connection or otherness depending upon the reader's origin" ("Where" 96), but the plurality of Mennonite groups reveals that the categories are not as simple as a binary between "us" and "them". Mennonites are not a monolithic group or culture. As Margaret Loewen Reimer writes:

No two groups [of Mennonites] are quite alike. On the other hand, there are many similarities and it is often difficult to understand and appreciate the multitude of splits and breakaways which have occurred. (6)

Eugeen Roosens states, "...an ethnic group is, first of all, a form of social organization in which the participants themselves make use of certain cultural traits from their past, a past which may or may not be verifiable historically...." (12). Roosens claims that groups give themselves markers of difference and choose which

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<sup>8</sup> Different spellings of "Canadier" exist as well. "Kanadier" is a more German version of the word.

things will define themselves as members of that group.<sup>9</sup> The number of subcultures within the Mennonite group makes consensus difficult.<sup>10</sup>

In her introduction to *Acts of Concealment* Tiessen suggests: Post-colonial literary theory may well prove to be instructive in any future study of the development and place of the literature of the Mennonites in Canada in so far as it has focused on how language and writing in post-colonial cultures have been appropriated for use away from a "privileged norm" or dominant cultural centre.... (12)

*The Empire Writes Back* claims that the post-colonial author makes use of particular strategies to mark his or her text as different from the dominant culture. "Cultural difference is not inherent in the text but is inserted by...strategies" (Ashcroft 65). The text does not display these markings as an expression of some kind of genetic ethnicity. The non-English word is "metonymic of cultural difference" (Ashcroft 52). According to this argument, the use of (Low) German words by Mennonite authors could be interpreted as a deliberate strategy to mark a text as different from the dominant culture. Fish comments that readers and writers operate according to the same code. The non-English word, however, is part of a different kind of code which might be called "english" according to Ashcroft *et al.* and their theory of writing. Ashcroft and his

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<sup>9</sup> Obviously, the same thing happens in the larger culture. The larger culture decides which traits they will characterize an ethnic group by.

<sup>10</sup> In this context it is important to mention the work of the Mennonite Historical society, who, through its translation and publication of documents pertaining to Mennonite history, creates a version of history which can become institutionalized.

collaborators make a distinction between "English" and "english":

We need to distinguish between what is proposed as a standard code, English (the language of the erstwhile imperial centre), and the linguistic code, english, which has been transformed and subverted into several distinctive varieties throughout the world. (8)

I propose to use the same distinction throughout this discussion. "English" will denote the English of dictionary meanings, while "english" will be synonymous with the non-official language use. When I refer to the "non-English" word, then, I am referring to a word that is unlikely to show up in the *OED*, or any other dictionary of "proper" English.

English is increasingly seen as a "universal" mode of communication.<sup>11</sup> Whether using non-English words, or using the vernacular in prairie poetry (Cooley), each constitutes a challenge to the universal status of English, and rather emphasizes that many englishes exist. Naomi Schor argues in her book *The Theory of the Detail* that inclusion of specific details in the evolution of painting and sculpture was seen as a challenge to the platonic ideal of universal beauty and forms: "The censure of the particular is one of the enabling gestures of neo-classicism, which recycled into the modern age the classical equation of the Ideal with the absence of all particularity" (Schor 3). Merle Good, an American Mennonite writer comments on the traditional antagonism between novelist and religious fundamentalist in similar terms:

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<sup>11</sup> Magdalene Redekop argues that the difficulty Jakob Friesen encounters at the airport in *The Blue Mountains of China* indicates that English is increasingly becoming a "lowest common denominator" ("Translated" 113).



"In telling stories, we assume that if you want to communicate an idea like forgiveness, the less specific it is, the more universal it will be. And I think the church has quarrelled with this over the centuries" (Pinsker 60). Of course universality can never be achieved. Even Jesus' parables are culturally marked; they reflect the culture in which they were written. The presence of non-English words in a text, by foregrounding the "particular", is a challenge to the concept of universality itself.

This challenge to universality does not create a stable boundary between minority culture and dominant culture, however. Rather than enforcing a binary between "us and them", the use of the non-English word in the texts of Canadian Mennonites ultimately reveals that the cultural boundaries between "us" and "them" are permeable, ambivalent, unstable.<sup>12</sup> My discussion will be based primarily on three quite different novels by Canadian Mennonite authors: Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), Anne Konrad's *The Blue Jar* (1985) and Armin Wiebe's *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens* (1984). In choosing to call these authors "Mennonite", I am side-stepping the question of identity and following Hildi Tiessen's definition of a Mennonite artist<sup>13</sup>, since it is she who asserts that Mennonites are producing "an insider literature" ("Stranger" 51). Reader-response theory is important

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<sup>12</sup> I am not arguing that this "message" is the intent of the authors, or that it will be evident to all readers.

<sup>13</sup> Actually, Tiessen provides a definition of Mennonite art: "...Mennonite literature and art consist of work which has been produced by individuals who were nurtured within a Mennonite community, who--especially during their formative years--had access to the inside of the Gemeinschaft. Whether they chose later to withdraw in part or in whole from the Mennonites is--for my purposes here--irrelevant..." ("Role" 237).

to my investigation for several reasons. Examining readers' responses to features of these texts reveals the binary between "us" and "them" to be arbitrary. Readers from the "outside" group sometimes interpret unfamiliar words in a similar way to those in the "inside" group, despite their cultural difference. And readers from the "inside" group produce a surprising diversity of interpretation. Thus, while cultural contexts are integral to interpretation, the construction of an "us" and "them" binary is not an adequate model. Reader-response theory is also important for situating my own interpretation of the texts' features. Ethnographic discourse is present in these texts along with various forms of direct and indirect glossing; the strategy of glossing seeks to enforce the idea that stable boundaries exist between cultural groups. Typography in texts, however, plays an important role in signalling both difference through italicization, and ambivalence through inconsistent usage. The technique of blending two languages (interlanguage) is present in these texts, and is important to my discussion of the permeability of boundaries. Finally, the novels have thematic concerns with the permeability of boundaries which can be interpreted in tandem with the other strategies to reveal a fundamental ambivalence about language and ethnic identity.

Tiessen challenges Canadian Mennonite writers to "augment the audiences, diminish the ambivalences, and raise the readers' awareness of who the Mennonites were--and who they continue to be" (Tiessen, "Stranger" 51). An exploration of the fiction of Canadian Mennonites reveals a great deal of ambiguity, but given the plural identities of readers, and the shifting nature of the

debate surrounding Mennonite identity (and more generally, ethnic identity), ambiguity is not only necessary, but desirable in the literature.

## 2: Readers' Responses to the non-English word

The Saussurian gap between the signifier and the signified means that the relationship between a word and its referent is arbitrary. No objective meaning resides in the text for the reader to access. Readers use cultural codes to interpret texts: the way people have been institutionally taught to read determines to a certain extent how they will decide upon an acceptable interpretation. The non-English word foregrounds the fact that the writer and the reader do not interpret the world using identical codes. How do readers figure out what is obviously unknown to them, what is not included in their conventional code of interpretation? In *Under the Tumtum Tree: From Nonsense to Sense*, Marlene Dolitsky presents her investigation into readers' strategies for interpreting nonsense words as a "key to the phenomenon of linguistic comprehension" (Dolitsky 1). In her concluding chapter she summarizes the strategies of readers:

When the meaning of neologisms in a partially understandable text is asked for, interpretation will begin by association through phonetic and orthographic resemblance and may depend on a semantic probability element where meaning must be in agreement with the words in the immediate environment of the neologism as well as in accordance with the frame of the text taken as a whole" (103)

Readers begin with homonyms and rely heavily on context.

In the spirit of Dolitsky's work, I have undertaken a small-scale idiosyncratic study of readers' responses to non-English

words in the texts that I am studying (see Appendix A).<sup>14</sup> I undertook this task partially out of curiosity, but also because I felt that a range of answers would be forthcoming, and would serve as a necessary contrast when juxtaposed against my own interpretations of unfamiliar words in the texts.<sup>15</sup> As might be expected, I found that my readers (myself included) rely heavily on phonetic associations to produce meaning. Dolitsky found that:

The participant, when presented with a free morpheme, immediately matches it to a conventionally coded homonym whose meaning is known, which is then assigned to the 'unknown slot'. Unknown linguistic signs are associated with and automatically translated into known linguistic signs. (20)

Homonymic strategies are key to hazarding a guess at a word's meaning. As a reader who understands a little High German through University training and no Low German, I use homonymic strategies to relate foreign words to English ones. The fact that English is a Germanic language cannot be ignored; it probably affects my interpretations of texts and ensures a reasonably satisfactory interpretation of unfamiliar words. The homonymic strategy is quite useful in hazarding interpretations of words in Armin Wiebe's

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<sup>14</sup> I do not pretend that my questionnaires were in any way objective or scientific. As such, the responses have satisfied my curiosity and been extremely helpful in the definition of my beliefs about readers' responses to texts. Dolitsky's study, although it is presented in a scientific framework of linguistic exploration, is constructed from her subjective assumptions and interpretation of her data. Unlike Dolitsky, I provide the reader of this study with my questionnaires and the responses in an appendix for him or her to peruse and contemplate; Dolitsky, for the most part, only presents her reader with her conclusions.

<sup>15</sup> See "Comments on the Appendix" (page 121) for further information.

*The Salvation of Yasch Siemens*. For example, "Christlich" (17) is easily recognizable as "Christlike"; and "gruelich" (78) I construe as similar to the English word "gruesome". The Low German dictionary gives a meaning for "grülijch": "fearful, frightful" (Rempel 48). Another example: Yasch says, "my heart starts to clapper real fast". The clapper of a bell serves as a homonym for me in English; I imagine Yasch's heart swinging back in forth in his chest. What I understand him to mean is that he is excited or nervous. Other readers use homonyms in other languages. One uses "kleppern", "to rattle" (Appendix 86). Another responds, "'Claupaht ', we'd say in Low German. Rattling would be the translation" (Appendix 86). The point that I want to make here, is that I can understand the phrase reasonably well although I do not have the linguistic advantages of the two respondents who know German and/or Low German. The word does not create a stable boundary between "insiders" and "outsiders".

Homonymic strategies can lead both "insiders" and "outsiders" astray, however (see Appendix). As Dolitsky claims, local context and larger context is of utmost importance in the interpretation of the unfamiliar word. In fact, it is difficult to separate the homonymic strategy from the contextual one. Words do not have meanings except in context. A local context is helpful according to a non-German-speaking reviewer of *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens*: "...the context always makes clear the meaning of German words. Can't you just hear grandfather 'knacking' sunflower seeds and see him 'qwauleming smoke' from his pipe?..." (Martens)<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Please note that page numbers are not available for specific quotations from Martens' review.

Martens assumes that when we "hear grandfather 'knacking' we will imagine something similar to what she imagines. She is relying on the similarity of our interpretive strategies. A larger context is useful for figuring out a repeated word such as "hartsoft". "Hartsoft" appears throughout *Yasch Siemens* as a kind of intensifier word. Rempel in his dictionary of Plautdietsch glosses the word's meaning as "with force or might" (49). My own understanding of the word is enhanced by the homonymic associations of "heart" and "soft": something that makes a heart go soft must be powerful. My parents<sup>17</sup>, however, who lack the context of the novel, figure out a similar meaning based on its presence in several of the sentences presented to them in my questionnaire (Appendix 87). My father and my Aunt point out the homonym "hard" from the German (Appendix 82). Similarly, I interpret words like "schultenbot" (68) and "hof" (13) in Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China* with some patience by taking note of repetition and context. The ultimate point of the comparisons I am making

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<sup>17</sup> It might seem odd that I use my father and my mother as references in this thesis. By referring to them in their familial relationship to me, I am continually emphasizing that I am a reader positioned within a framework, a context; I am not an objective, neutral commentator (nor does this beast exist). It might seem somewhat unprofessional to use them as sources of information, but other authors writing in the same subject area do not refer to anthropologists' texts on the behaviour of Mennonites (and anthropologists are not objective either...), but to their own experience. Some authors give this information as fact while some (like Magdalene Redekop) highlight the personal basis of their theoretical positions. It would not make my work any more objective if I referred to my father as Edward G. Janzen and my mother as H. Susan Janzen. Likewise, I do not apologize for the idiosyncrasies of the exercise, because under the conditions it would be beyond the scope of my work to PRETEND to an objective "scientific" study on reader-response. And close inspection of the linguistic study of Dolitsky reveals her biases clearly, and indicates that the information gleaned is not necessarily "objective fact".

between my interpretations of words and those of my respondents is that despite my ignorance of Low German I manage to come up with interpretations which I find acceptable for producing meaning, and which, in many cases are similar to the interpretations of my respondents who know the languages in question.

But I must return to Keith's assumption that if "any... responsible writer...[feels] that the meaning of any word [is] essential, it ...[will be]...explained in some way" ("Where" 96). Surely I am satisfied with my navigation of the texts because it is the intent of the authors that I should understand the meaning of non-English words? Certain phrases, however, are not easily understandable through a direct gloss, an indirect gloss, obvious homonyms, or context. Stanley Fish asserts that a simple sentence gives the following message:

Because [an easy an comprehensible sentence] gives information directly and simply, it asserts (silently, but effectively) the 'givability', directly and simply, of information; and it is thus an extension of the ordering operation we perform on experience whenever it is filtered through our temporal-spatial consciousness. In short, it *makes sense*, in exactly the way we make (i.e. manufacture) sense of whatever, if anything, exists outside us; and by making easy sense it tells us that sense can be easily made and that we are capable of easily making it. (75)

What message then, is given, by a sentence which is not easily comprehensible? A phrase from Sandra Birdsell's *The Missing Child* (1990) mystifies me (but might make perfect sense to some other



reader).<sup>18</sup> The unglossed phrase must be interpreted like most literary meaning, from the wider structure of the text using the interpretive codes and strategies that the reader has mastered culturally and institutionally. "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" appears in Birdsell's *The Missing Child* in italics. I am intrigued by the possible significance of these words, but can only figure out that they might be an obscenity, which would supply a contrast to the speaker's apparent angelic knowledge of scriptures. Or it could be another Biblical invocation which foreshadows the doom of Jacob and the valley. Or it could be words he picked up as he and his mother fled from Germany. I gather that they might be German because the words are italicized, and because they sound vaguely German to me. Also, the speakers are supposed to be talking in German. My respondents have trouble with this phrase, given to them out of context. My mother writes, "My, My (name)?" (Appendix 119). She makes a guess based on the interpretive codes on which she draws. Another respondent hazards "Menetekel--warning" (Appendix 119). Does this response confirm my feeling that the words might have something to do with a warning or is it simply another way of asymptotically approaching the "meaning" of the text? The words "Tekel" and "Upharsin" might in fact be unfamiliar Biblical allusions.<sup>19</sup> By now I am unsure which language these words belong to, if any. The boundaries between languages are

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<sup>18</sup> The only other "foreign" phrase in the novel is "schnell" (161) which I for one recognize from watching too many *Hogan's Heroes* reruns as a child.

<sup>19</sup> Prof Kröller comments on my first draft: "You do know it's the proverbial writing on the wall, don't you?" See *New Bible Dictionary*, page 760. Dn. 5:25.

blurred. Because I do not know the meaning of these words, they do not necessarily act as a barrier, especially because I cannot pinpoint someone who might easily interpret them, but can also act as a site of fantasy as Dolitsky discovered in her study of children's reactions to nonsense. "It is obvious that, as conventional linguistic code markers are taken away, something must fill the vacuum to decode the message" (Dolitsky 104).<sup>20</sup> Codes of literary interpretation that I have learned institutionally step in to fill the gap. The coincidence of my interpretation of this phrase with Sandra Birdsell's authorial intentions depends upon similar codes of interpretation, (in this case institutionally accepted literary interpretation) not on my inclusion as an "insider" in one of her ethnic groups.<sup>21</sup>

Another example of a context-dependent phrase which is not easily understandable comes from Armin Wiebe's novel. When Sadie asks Yasch if he is "taking Oata with", he responds, "Chinga freow met sukka bestreit" (103). This phrase is quite confusing to me, but I assume from the context that it is some parting shot to Sadie. My respondents translate each word in the phrase but cannot make sense of the whole; my Aunt, however, writes:

Children questions with sugar sprinkled--the reply we were given when adults didn't want to answer our question. Always

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<sup>20</sup> Dolitsky's use of the phrase "decode the message" implies that one message, the "meaning", exists for a text. Her interpretation is based on the assumption that literary texts are communications between the author and the reader. She points out that authorial intention is the key to participant interest. Participants must feel that the words have some meaning or value for the emitter of the message (14-15).

<sup>21</sup> Sandra Birdsell's mother is Mennonite and her father is Métis.

frustrating because the saying made no sense. (Appendix 84) Although several of my respondents know Low German, only one responds with recognition, highlighting the fact that readers come from many contexts. Not all of the "insider" readers can make sense of the phrase.

Thus the binary configuration of "insiders" and "outsiders" to a culture proves to be too simplified a model. The idea of the ideal Mennonite reader who can fully understand the "meaning" (a stable objective meaning) of the text is not feasible. The experiment that I conducted with my readers reveals that they recognize some words and not others. Differences exist between their interpretations despite the fact that they grew up in reasonably close proximity to each other and attended the same church. The importance of context is paramount. My father does not know the exact usage of a certain word "Hingst", something to do with a horse. My mother's comments indicate that she (who grew up on a farm) knows the word (Appendix 70). My father recognizes and glosses the word "zirks" because of his interest in mechanics, while my mother does not recognize the word at all (Appendix 100). The cultural context is important to the reader, but many other contexts are equally important: Russländer versus Kanadier (my parents and relatives are Russländer), farmer family versus teacher family, and male versus female. My mother comments at the end of the exercise that she feels that *The Blue Jar* is written by a woman, just by the kinds of words that I ask her to gloss. She has this impression because the other word lists include crude, earthy language (Appendix 120). Magdalene Redekop comments on the Oata rhyme:

It is what we would call *prust*--very crude--and it ends with Oata tasting a bit of what she thinks is an Easter Egg, only to find that it is excrement. I always find that I can hardly bear to read the rhyme to myself and I certainly cannot read it aloud to my students--this despite the fact that it is in a strongly ironic context. (Redekop, "Madonna" 124)

Who is the ideal reader? Unlike Fish, I believe that readers come from so many different contexts that there is no generic reader, despite the similarities between the ways that people read! No generic reader exists to discuss. My own interpretation is a *mélange*; my critical practice is a collage of my own reading mixed with critics' readings and comments from relatives. A contrast even exists between myself as a first reader and myself as a second reader, almost a year later, with that much more knowledge of my subject matter. Dolitsky found that children use texts to further their own fantasies and aims; they use the text to say what they want to say. I hope that my interpretation will be more text-based than the interpretations of children, but as Francesco Lorrigio asserts, theories are integrally linked to the texts upon which they are built (54-5).

### 3: Orthography, Typography, Interlanguage

Thus far, I have not suggested that any features of the texts themselves contribute to ambivalence surrounding the separation between cultures, but only that the nature of readers generates the permeable boundaries. I have chosen three texts in which to explore these ideas further: Rudy Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China* (1970), Anne Konrad's *The Blue Jar* (1985), and Armin Wiebe's *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens* (1984). The use of the non-English word in each text acts as a marker of ambivalence toward the separation of languages and boundaries. E.A. Levenston's analysis of the "stuff of literature", the physical aspects of texts, asserts that form is integral to interpretation of literature. In these three texts, orthography, typography and interlanguage<sup>22</sup> contribute in varying degrees to the creation of a text which is ambivalent about cultural boundaries. The novels are thematically concerned with the boundaries between "us" and "them"; the physical aspects, therefore, act in concert with theme to produce this ambivalence.

Levenston begins his chapter on spelling with the observation that "the history of English spelling records a process of ever-increasing standardization. From a time when men spelled as they spoke, and were thought none the worse for so doing, we have reached a state of near complete uniformity...." (33). High

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<sup>22</sup> Levenston's discussion of interlanguage falls under the category of "spelling". Spelling is obviously an important part of interlanguage, especially for the discussion of Armin Wiebe's work, but generally, my discussion will be more concerned with the syntactical fusion between languages.

German, of course, is standardized in a similar way. In contrast, Low German is a language that exists in many forms: "The Low German language does not exist in a standardized form, but in numerous dialects, *Plautdietsch* being one of them" (Reuben Epp 67). Even the name for the language is not used by all; Rudy Wiebe uses the term "Lowgerman".<sup>23</sup> I use the two-word form along with the majority of commentators. The lack of standard orthography introduces another marker to indicate the plurality of this language. Reuben Epp explains the history of the decline of written Low German:

..when a people sees its culture and language disintegrate, it becomes more receptive to the language and culture of a more successful people. Low German gradually ceased being the overall written language and yielded to the High German of the successful South. It continued for a long time in written form as a disdained second-rate language to be used only in jest, in ridicule and for amusement" (Epp 63-4).

High German became the language of church and legality while Low German remained as a mainly oral language to be spoken at home.<sup>24</sup> Variations exist, then, between authors' spellings of the same Low German word. As Magdalene Redekop comments, "Low German is essentially an unwritten language and the spelling of words, being

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<sup>23</sup> Wiebe uses this term in *The Blue Mountains of China*, but "Low German" in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*.

<sup>24</sup> Epp comments on the widespread opinion of Low German as a degraded language; this opinion was/is certainly shared by my relatives. My father, however, writes on his questionnaire: "I loved the exercise...I learned to love the low G words because they were so efficient in expressing exactly what I 'know' they meant....I grew up with a low opinion of the low G language. This exercise changed my mind and I see what I missed" (Appendix 119).

phonetic, is as varied as the number of people who try to write it" ("Translated" 121). Low German dictionaries exist, but they did not prove useful in my investigations because of the variations in spelling. Armin Wiebe opts for English modes of spelling while other authors opt for German orthographic rules. The variation between spellings reduces the chance that even "insiders" to the language will consistently recognize Low German words as being familiar to them. My mother comments, "...it took some time to remember. low German is not easily read...would have to say the word or words out loud" (Appendix 120). Similarly my father says, "...the combination of vowels and consonants used by the authors to sound a word took some work. It helped if I said it again and again breaking the word at different places. Sometimes it clicked. Sometimes it didn't" (Appendix 119). Dolitsky: "It would seem...that the ability to call on strategies to assign word meaning is not a faculty that is equally distributed among the population" (Dolitsky 36).

When Dolitsky has her participants attempt to interpret concrete poetry in a foreign language, she concludes that form is integral to interpretation:

Certainly when words are comprehensible, the role of form is diminished. However, the important effect of form on interpretation when the words give little to go on implies that a form factor contributes to text meaning. (Dolitsky 90)

In the case of typography, the italic font indicates otherness. The non-English word is usually presented in an italic font, a convention widely in use by the end of the sixteenth century (Levenston 93). The *MLA Style Manual* instructs:

Some titles are italicized...as are...foreign words in an English text. The numerous exceptions to this last rule include...foreign words anglicized through frequent use. Since American English rapidly naturalizes words, use a dictionary to decide whether a foreign expression requires italics. (2.2.8.)

What is significant about these guidelines is that even if a phrase is found in an "American" dictionary, anglicized or naturalized, it is still considered a "foreign expression". The difficulty comes when it is time to decide if a phrase has been "naturalized through common use" or not. The only way of figuring out if something is English or not is by referring to a dictionary, which is an institutionalized set of conventions: there is nothing intrinsically "English", only a group of words which have institutionally been declared "English". Diversity between dictionaries indicates the constructed nature of the concept "English". All three texts display idiosyncrasies and inconsistency in the typography of the non-English word, which ultimately indicate the permeability of the boundaries between English and other languages.

The most obvious blending of languages in these texts comes from the use of "Interlanguage".<sup>25</sup> Ashcroft describes interlanguage as the "fusion of the linguistic structures of two languages" (66). The term comes from studies of the learning processes of students of a second language. A student's use of interlanguage is marked by erroneous usage according to the

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<sup>25</sup> The term "Interlanguage" was first used by Larry Selinker in his article "Interlanguage" *I.R.A.L.* 10.3 (1972): 209-231.



standards of the target language, but displays a "certain regularity, a systematic use of language forms that lie somewhere between two languages" (Levenston 50). Ashcroft insists that an interlanguage is a "genuine language system" (67). In the texts under discussion, interlanguage is both a genuine language system and a marker for dialogue in a foreign language, represented in English. The actual grammar and syntax of the interlanguage between Low German or German and English, however, acts as a symbol of the mixture between cultures that occurs.

These physical aspects of the texts (orthography, typography, and interlanguage) act in tandem with thematic concerns about the boundaries between cultures to signal to the reader that boundaries between languages and cultures cannot be perceived as stable. There is no true boundary between "us" and "them".

4: *The Blue Mountains of China* by Rudy Wiebe

My discussion will begin with Rudy Wiebe's novel because it is *The Blue Mountains of China* that forms the subject of the debate between Keith and Tiessen. Rudy Wiebe is the best-known Canadian Mennonite writer, and therefore his use of language has been discussed more widely than the other two writers with which this study is concerned. Van Toorn advances the theory that "by unveiling the...question" of "social injustice" in the last chapter, Wiebe "reaccents the entire text retroactively" (123). To a certain extent, my reading of Armin Wiebe's novel has done the same to my interpretation of both *The Blue Mountains of China* and *The Blue Jar*. Features apparent in *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens* and also in Anne Konrad's novel, are also present in Rudy Wiebe's text, I would argue, but not in the same way. The other novels' use of typography and orthography, for example, is more significant, but all three texts use interlanguage as a device. The question to be answered, however, is whether Wiebe's use of non-English words perpetuates an "us" and "them" binary. I would argue that it does not when examined within the context of the novel.

*The Blue Mountains of China* is a departure in style from Rudy Wiebe's first novel *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. *Peace Shall Destroy Many* does not contain any non-English words because it was written as an M.A. exercise for a professor who did not encourage linguistic experimentation (Keith, "Where" 94). The tension between languages and cultures forms an integral part of the novel. In Wapiti, language is used as a barrier. As Pastor Lepp explains to

Thom, "There's nothing Christian about the language itself....The fact is, it's a barrier between us and the worldly English surroundings we have to live in. There is merit in that, for it makes our separation easier; keeps it before us all the time" (88). It is ironic, then, that the debate about language should come to us in English (Keith, "Where" 88). The language barrier has not proved to be effective in maintaining a boundary around a metaphorical "Wapati". In an ethnographic passage, which Keith takes as evidence that Wiebe is not writing with a mainly Mennonite audience in mind ("Where" 89), Wiebe's narrator explains the linguistic practices of the Mennonite community:

They [talk] in Low German. The peculiar Russian Mennonite use of three languages [causes] no difficulties for there [are] inviolable, though unstated, conventions as to when each [is] spoken. High German [is] always used when speaking of religious matters and as a gesture of politeness toward strangers; a Low German dialect [is] spoken in the mundane matters of everyday living; the young people [speak] English almost exclusively among themselves. Thought and tongue [slip] unhesitatingly from one language to the other. (20)

In this passage, the narrator would have us believe that the boundaries between English, Low German, and High German are stable, almost palpable. No one ever mixes up the languages or the contexts in which they are appropriate. The noted Mennonite historian H.S. Bender has a different version of this polyglot background. He argues that "the speaking of several languages is probably only an enrichment for 'highly intelligent persons' while others suffer from 'confusion of vocabulary and ideas, undesirable

carry over of idioms from one language to the other...and undesirable foreign accents'" (Redekop, "Translated" 122-3). In *The Blue Mountains of China*, Wiebe explores the "confusion of vocabulary and ideas" and the "carry over of idioms from one language to another".

Wiebe does not make use of any uncommon typographical strategies in his use of the non-English word. Words like "schluss" (7), "hauptcheuik" (11), and "dummheit" (204) appear throughout the text in italics. Wiebe makes use of both German and Low German words. The non-English word is effectively separated by the use of italics. "Campo" (97), "kolkhoz" (127), and "droshky" (127) are not italicized, though they seem just as "foreign" as the other words just mentioned. A trip to the dictionary reveals, however, that these must be "foreign words anglicized through frequent use" (MLA 2.2.8.).<sup>26</sup> So far the typography reveals nothing about the specific text, but only reinforces my previous knowledge of the historically situated and institutionally reinforced creation of English through the institutions of dictionaries. A few (Low) German expressions escape italicization, like "Muttachi" (16), "Mutti" (13), and "Na ya" (27). Of course, "Uhhhhgg" (14) and "Yuck" (24) are not italicized; but then, they cannot be said to belong to a non-English language. These slight typographical inconsistencies are magnified in Anne Konrad's text; in *The Blue Mountains of China* I must look to other techniques to see the permeability of the

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<sup>26</sup> campo: "A large, grassy South American plain with occasional bushes and small trees". droshky (also drosky): "An open, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage once common in Russia." kolkhoz: "A Soviet collective farm." Webster's II 1984 ed.

boundaries of "us" and "them".

At the beginning of the novel, the reader encounters non-English syntax within a few sentences. This German syntax reflects the German word order; Frieda Friesen is speaking in Low German, one would assume, but no guide, like the ethnographic description in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, is given for the reader.<sup>27</sup> Redekop asserts that Frieda's "syntax and vocabulary evoke the sounds of the Low German which can be heard, simultaneously, as one reads the English" ("Translated" 98). Redekop calls this technique "oversetting", a well-known term (to Mennonites) also mentioned by my Aunt in her response to my questionnaire. Redekop goes on to say that "the interpolated Low German words...ensure that the reader will be forced into activity--moving constantly between separate worlds" ("Translated" 100). Are the boundaries between these worlds stable? The yoking of English and German into an interlanguage of "english" suggests that they are not. Wiebe's text shows his characters struggling with the boundaries between "us" and "them" and argues that a truly Christian vision would discard such boundaries (Van Toorn 12).

In "The Well", the emphasis is on the boundaries between cultures, the needless schisms that exist between different groups of Mennonites. Anna Friesen's dangerous attraction to a *Rusländer* is the topic of this story. The *Rusländer* are seen as different; they are less conservative, and, significantly, they speak

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<sup>27</sup> I believe that the first example of the use of interlanguage as metonymy, in this case for, Pennsylvania "Dutch", in Canadian Mennonite literature is *The Trail of the Conestoga* by B. Mabel Dunham. (Toronto: MacMillan Co., 1924). For example, Christian says, "I was chust thinkin'....mebbe till next winter we are in Canada already" (3).

differently. This passage is written from the Kanadier perspective:

They [Russlander] [speak] the same Lowgerman as the Kanadier, though with a very different accent, with some unheard-of words. And they emigrated only once for their faith. (100)

The man who enchants Anna at the well speaks to her, "the Lowgerman voice slightly off-accented" (103). The passage suggests that language can somehow embody culture, and carry its religious freight. The arbitrary boundaries between culture, class and hemispheres is also emphasized in "Over the Red Line". In this story Liesel ventures up to the deck for First Class passengers on the ship that is taking her people to South America. She hears languages which she considers beautiful; even the High German is "refined" (81). Low German is associated, in her mind, with "the heavy feltboots some men still [wear], so stinking when they [schluff] by" (81). Liesel "suffers from linguistic as well as social claustrophobia" (Van Toorn 130). To Liesel the boundaries between "us" and "them" seem unbridgeable, though ironically, the black shawl which she ties around her middle so that she can achieve the effect of a trailing long skirt (74) is coveted by one of the first-class passengers (85). The hand-made shawl is juxtaposed with the artificiality of the tourists on the upper deck. Each seems to want something that the other has. The cultures are not so exclusive as they would first appear.

The arbitrary nature of boundaries between classes is highlighted in the book's second chapter "Sons and Heirs". The narrative thrust of the story suggests that the two main characters, Yascha and Escha, have much in common despite their

class and linguistic differences. When Escha first comes to the Friesen household looking for work, the only Low German word that he knows is "awbeide" (the Low German version of "Arbeit"). Jakob (the son and heir) scornfully reflects that his father probably knows Russian better than the Russian peasant does (19). In other words, language mastery is not a cultural marker but a marker of privilege in this context. The ethnic and religious differences between Escha and Jakob are erased, however, when Jakob returns from prison to a different reality. Fragmented Bible verses keep appearing in Jacob's head; now that the hierarchical structure of discipline (the father and the community of "fathers") is gone he knows only the words; they are empty for him.<sup>28</sup> When Escha refuses to stay in the barn, when he crosses the perceived boundary between the animal and the human, Jakob cannot ignore the animalistic side to himself (Van Toorn 142). Van Toorn (and other critics) see Escha and Jakob as parts of the same personality. The plural title "Sons and Heirs" suggests that Jacob's fall is his failure to perceive the boundary between himself and the lower-class peasant as arbitrary and fragile; "the border between self and other is problematic" (Van Toorn 139).

Certain characters in Wiebe's novel suggest a "vision of universal human kinship" (Van Toorn 155). Frieda Friesen's story envelopes all the other stories with the force of her kinship bonds: "her family expands so greatly as to raise the question,

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<sup>28</sup> The question about the spiritual relevance of repetition and recitation of the words of the Bible comes up in Sandra Birdsell's *The Missing Child* in the ambivalence surrounding Hendrick's "gift". It is also relevant in *The Blue Jar* when an index of spirituality is correlated by the community with the number of Bible verses a child can memorize (99).

who is not kin to Frieda?" (Van Toorn 155). She crosses social boundaries between Kanadier and Russlander, rural and urban, and also moves between continents, finding family and friends everywhere (Van Toorn 155). The story of "The Vietnam call of Samuel U. Reimer" also questions the arbitrary boundaries between self and other.<sup>29</sup> In his debate with the pastor Reimer asks:

"Okay. My kid deserves to live more than a Vietnamese?"

"Well, in theory, of course--no but--" (177)

The obstacles of the geographical location of Vietnam, the boundaries between East and West, are nothing compared to those Sam encounters at home. The text asserts that these human boundaries should be subsumed and erased in a "true" christian spirit.

The same theme is emphasized in the last story when everyone meets in a ditch, and they discover that they are all related. They all speak Low German and come from the same culture, but how differently they live their lives! Elizabeth (Liesel) Driedger, is master of many languages, and acts as interpreter and good samaritan for Jakob Friesen. When she finds that they are both Mennonite, they switch from Russian to Low German, but she is initially disturbed: "She [laughs] a little, pushed quite off-balance now...by the impossibility of now speaking to him as a complete stranger" (189). Friesen is technically still a "complete" stranger, but the boundary between them has suddenly been shattered by a name (his recognizably Mennonite name). The significance of language in the construction and diminishment of boundaries is also illustrated in the figure of Dennis Willms.

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<sup>29</sup> It also questions the socially constructed boundaries between sanity and insanity.



Willms has anglicized his surname, disguised it as "Williams" and "sold out", it is implied.<sup>30</sup> When he speaks Low German to John Reimer, the man carrying the cross, Willms thinks that he is speaking privately in a minority language that not many people are likely to know; later he is surprised to find that the language that he is using to exclude, to alienate a segment of his listeners (and to upbraid one of his group), is not private at all. "Does everyone in this ditch speak Lowgerman?" (208), he finally asks. Everyone in the ditch speaks Low German, but the same cannot be said for Wiebe's readership. The unexpected kinship of the characters, even though they disagree, shows how interconnected their lives are despite the fact that they have not met each other. Redekop: "Beginning with young Jakob and Escha, we have been led to discover kinship in apparent foreigners....The pluralism of languages and voices is...defined against a backdrop of ultimate unity..." ("Translated" 117). Keith goes so far as to assert that the group in the ditch is "not only a representative group of the Mennonites of 1967 but (as the centenary date suggest) a microcosm of Canadian society--and even of the contemporary world as a whole" (Keith, Introduction 5). Alan Wald's critique of the "ethnicity school" of criticism points out the problems in subsuming race under the rubric of ethnicity, and I see similar problems with Keith's assertion that this group of Mennonites can truly represent a cross-section of Canadian society, let alone the world. I would argue that the kinship and paradoxical plurality in the ditch shows that the boundaries between foreigner and family, self and other,

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<sup>30</sup> Or more accurately, exploited his own people during the war (*Blue Mountains of China* 149).

are surprisingly flexible.

In his introduction to the NCL edition, Keith comments that *The Blue Mountains of China* is "admittedly a difficult novel" (2). But as Redekop asserts, it is not the non-English words that make the novel difficult:

Although the absence of a glossary is a possible irritation for many readers, it indicates that the interpolated Low German words have, in themselves, no arcane significance which, if glossed, might provide the key to the novel's often baffling complexities. ("Translated" 99)

The presence of a glossary, however, would not put all readers on the same ground. The reader's context is still of the utmost importance, and as I have tried to point out, the plurality within the community of proposed "insiders" means that they are not reading homogeneously. Leaving words untranslated, according to Ashcroft, "is a political act, because... glossing gives the translated word, and thus the 'receptor' culture, the higher status" (66). Discarding glossing releases language from "the myth of cultural authenticity" and demonstrates "the fundamental importance of the situating context in according meaning" (Ashcroft 66). Discarding glossing allows the boundaries between "us" and "them" to be more permeable and less predictable.

5: *The Blue Jar* by Anne Konrad

Anne Konrad's novel can be found in the juvenile section of the library; the connected short stories centre on the perspective of Annchen (Anne) Klassen as she grows up. Clara Thomas discusses the novel as a telling of "the childhood", and comments that "*The Blue Jar* might be sub-titled 'Elegy to a simple, hard, Godly--and lost--way of life'" (135). Its linguistic strategies seem to be linked to its audience. Konrad uses appositives to gloss her foreign words clearly: "the *Sprüche*, those sheets of perforated cards each with a picture of birds, flowers, butterflies." (2) She even provides an etymological purpose to her definitions; the narrator explains that a *Spruch* is a bible verse. The foreign words are usually glossed parenthetically in an invasive manner or sometimes explained in a more elegant contextual manner. Generally, interpretation of the language is direct. The narrator even clarifies for her audience that her family is "German-speaking" and the next word is a German word to emphasize that these italicized words are in that language (7). The glossing technique serves to highlight the differences between cultures by explaining the meanings of words in an ethnographic (nostalgic) context. The function of glossing, "to form a bridge between the 'centre' and 'margin', simultaneously defines their unbridgeable separation" (Ashcroft 57).

The aberrations in the typography, however, undermine the sense of "unbridgeable separation" between cultures. Ashcroft maintains that "the word in the bracket is ironically given the status of 'the real'" (62) in glossing. In one instance, however,

the text reverses this convention: "head cheese (*Zilkase*)" (92). I would not argue that the typographical features of the text which undermine the exclusiveness of the various languages are Konrad's intentions; perhaps the idiosyncrasies of the text show a sloppy editing process. After all, Queenston House Publishing is not McClelland and Stewart, which is the publisher of Wiebe's *The Blue Mountains of China*. Nevertheless, the inconsistencies highlight the confusion between languages that I experience when I read *The Blue Jar*. Sometimes "Tante" is italicized and sometimes it is not. The same is true of "zwiebach" and "Leiter". Occasionally italicized words are placed in quotation marks as well! The instability of the typography (though probably not deliberate) undercuts the one-to-one translations and explanations offered by the narrator, and confuses the boundaries between English and (Low) German.

Interlanguage is used in Konrad's text as well. The characters in the novel speak German most of the time; their dialogue in German is represented by impeccable English. When the German immigrants are trying to communicate with their Norwegian neighbours, however, they speak a stilted English, an interlanguage which is marked by irregularities of pronunciation represented by aberrant spelling. This interlanguage builds community: Annchen recounts an incident which all the immigrants find funny; "everyone at Beaverdam [laughs] in bush-English" (8).<sup>31</sup> Here is an example of the mother speaking with her next-door Norwegian neighbour, Mrs. Helderson, about the new-born twins:

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<sup>31</sup> Incidentally, I don't get the joke.

"You tink de live, Mrs. Helderson?"

"Ja, sure dey live."

"Not drink, de boy. I...not yunuf milk?" (18)

It is easy to figure out what these people are saying to one another, but most words are not italicized. These words belong to the lower-case english interlanguage rather than to English; but the words are english according to the typography. Note that the word "ja", however, remains italicized because it comes from a different language. And yet, a few lines later Father says, "I talk mit Mama" (18). "Mit" is the German "with", and not a distortion of some English word. This example is just one of many ambivalences and contradictions that the text displays when it comes to the divisions between languages. These ambivalences and contradictions make it difficult to assert that Konrad's use of language reinforces a boundary between "insiders" and "outsiders".

These linguistic aberrations occur in a text which is strongly concerned with the boundaries between "us" and "them". Annchen explains the divisions this way:

The pupils at Poplar Hill School [are] divided between Mennonite children and "*Englische*". *Englische* [is] a general term for the Fowlers, Howells, Sanderquists, Torgersons, Larsens, Johannsens, in short, anyone not one of us. (32)

The italics reinforce the strength of the division between "us" and "them" in this passage. "Englische" not only stands for those of British origin; it encompasses everyone. Maintaining these boundaries is difficult, however, especially when the Norwegian neighbours of the Klassens are kinder to them than the hypocritical Mennonites who should look after their own. Again and again the

theme of hypocrisy and betrayal comes up when Mennonite community is discussed. The friendliness of the Norwegians is not an adequate substitute for the support of one's own people, some stories suggest. Annchen's mother tells her the story often about how Annchen almost became Norwegian. The opening to this tale is quite ambivalent about the division between ethnic groups:

Then, and later, my parents always spoke very warmly about our Norwegian neighbours, but it was understood that they weren't "us". Had I not been saved in the nick of time from becoming Norwegian? "You'd be talking Norwegian now and not even know us," Mother would tell me. "I wouldn't. Of course I talk German and English, " I'd protest.... (15)

If the Norwegians are not "us", Mennonite, then how is it that Annchen could have almost become Norwegian? The first phrase seems to indicate that an essential difference exists between the Norwegians and the Mennonites, while the later sentences imply that the acquisition of language is the important thing. There is a connection: if Annchen had grown up speaking Norwegian, she would not have known her own genetic family. The young Annchen is given to some Norwegian neighbours to care for while her mother recovers from the birth of twins. Mrs. Helderson's sister-in-law is childless, in contrast to the *Kinderreich* (7) Klassens, and wants to keep Annchen. Mrs. Helderson tells the Klassens: "My sister-in-law, she hopes.... Lars says your Annchen talks Norwegian. Maybe you tink about it...?" (19). Father goes to the household and waits for Annchen to wake up. When she does she cries: "Mama...(Norwegian)" (21) according to Konrad. The parenthetical "Norwegian" is not clear. I would suppose that it means the child

is crying out in Norwegian, but the author cannot provide the Norwegian word for "Mama" and so provides the English. Father Klassen wins the baby back by speaking to it in German:

"Annchen," Father [says], "What are you doing my child?" He [speaks] it in German. Annchen [looks] unsure.... "*Kind, Liebes Kind, hast du vergessen...*" He [talks] to her in German until slowly the child [looks] away from Christine Hanson and [studies] father. He [picks] her up.... (21)

The German phrase has no direct or indirect gloss in the text. It has a Biblical echo, especially since father is speaking in High German and not Low. Father seems rather God-like in this scene, winning an erring lamb back. Do these words mirror Christ's on the cross asking God if He has forsaken him? (My mother comments on this phrase: "I don't know where it's from", as if it should be from somewhere.)<sup>32</sup> The German language is made to bear the cultural burden of religious morality. When the child looks toward the man speaking German, father picks her up...not before. It is the familiarity of his language that wins Annchen's attention. And yet, the possibility that Annchen could have become Norwegian shows just how permeable the boundaries can be between families and cultures.

The boundaries between "us" and the "Englische" are challenged throughout Annchen's narrative. The mortality of the flesh is a great leveller in *The Blue Jar*. In the first chapter, in which Annchen describes her childish confusion at the death of an older sibling, she is surprised to see "Levalton the Norwegian...sitting

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<sup>32</sup> Prof. Kröller comments that it "sounds like a folksong to me, actually."

on the men's side [of the church]." She asks herself, "Why [is] he in our Mennonite church? Mrs. Helderson [sits] beside him. [Doesn't] she know women sit on the opposite side?" (6). The boundary between "us" and "them" has been crossed. And Mrs. Helderson does not respect the boundary that the Mennonite church traditionally enforces between men and women. At a different funeral Annchen remarks that her non-Mennonite schoolteacher looks like a "stranger" because of her lipstick and short skirt. About Miss Smith's appearance Annchen thinks:

"Worldly." How often Preacher Hiebert [has] warned the congregation, "Be not like this world."

Yet she cried at Susie's funeral. (68)

The evidence of Miss Smith's humanity, her compassion, makes Annchen question the religiously upheld division between the Mennonites and the "Englische". While Miss Smith's tears make her closer to Annchen in an attractive way, the discovery that another school teacher (they are always "Englische" teachers [69]) is all too human in an earthy way destroys the boundary in a more devastating manner. The chapter entitled "School" begins with a description of how the beautiful schoolteachers bring the world to the isolated students, and stimulate their imaginations (69). In the spring, however, the children find tin cans with "brown lump[s]" in them around the teacherage and discover that Miss Waterford was "too scared to go to the outhouse" during the winter (74). Annchen:

I [stare] at the rust-edged cans and suddenly [feel] very sad. [Is] she just like us then, my teacher, my perfect teacher....Velvet plush boots and lace collars, when it



[comes] right down to the important questions, like shadows at night, or fear and alone in the dark, [is] she just like me, her pupil? No magic? No answers? [Is] that all there [is]? Tin cans? (74)

The fact that Miss Waterford is not different dashes the hopes of Annchen the child, who is enchanted with the "magic" of the "Englische", with King George, Queen Elizabeth, *Renfrew of the Royal Mounted*, and Christmas cards. The destruction of the boundary between "us" and "them" leaves Annchen with nothing to hope for. When Annchen's older sister Tina becomes baptised she looks for evidence of a change in her sister. Will she suddenly become more holy? (171). Everywhere Annchen looks for the evidence of real boundaries and does not find it.

The Mennonite churches create and support boundaries between themselves, not just between themselves and the worldly "Englische". In "The Kirchliche", Annchen discusses the differences between the religious rules of two Mennonite groups. Annchen sums up the difference between them as a linguistic one (and shows that the gap between signifier and signified is also one of context):

Their fathers smoked; some even drank wine or beer and they danced at their weddings. For them it was "fun"; for us it was "sin". (152)

The quotation marks surrounding the words "fun" and "sin" show that the narrator is marking a linguistic equivalence between them, based on (in this case) a religio-cultural context. Annchen's friendship with Flora who is "Kirchliche", shows that she can cross this boundary, but when Flora's sister wants to marry someone from

outside her church, the marriage is never announced because it would mean that one person in the couple would have to switch churches. The results of the switch, however, would be quite drastic. The defector would be shunned by his or her own family and congregation: "In German shunning [is] *ausgeschlossen* and that word by itself [has] the ring of eternal damnation" (155).<sup>33</sup> The boundary between these groups must be maintained with extreme vigilance, it seems; the seriousness of shunning reflects how much is required to conserve the boundaries between "us" and "them".

Annchen and the other children, however, are the generation which desires to assimilate, to fit into a new land. They do not perceive the interlanguage "english" as acceptable. Annchen and the other children mercilessly mock a Bible school teacher who cannot master the correct code of English. He invites the children to "Summa Bible School" and the children react with incredulity: "A grown man with a huge moustache and he [cannot] say his 'r's'!" (98).<sup>34</sup> Julius Schier teaches the kids to sing: "It is summertime in my hat" (101). (I assume it should be "Summertime in my heart".) The concert for the parents turns out to be a fiasco when the children sing the words with Julius Schier's accent: "The parents [sit] stunned. Even German-speaking Mennonite parents [cannot] be fooled by so blatant an imitation of Julius Schier's

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<sup>33</sup> I found it interesting that my relatives did not identify "ausgeschlossen" as "shunning" (Appendix 116). Obviously it does not carry the ring of eternal damnation for them! For probing exploration of the custom of shunning see Patrick Friesen's book by the same title. For a hilarious folk tale about a young widow's exploitation of the custom, see Sara Stambaugh's, "How Lena Got Set Back" in *Liars and Rascals*.

<sup>34</sup> See my father's comments on pronunciation under "Fudderingham" (Appendix 76).

voice" (107). By imitating his improper English, the children are in a way criticizing the "bush-english" of their own parents; they are rejecting their past. The crowning touch comes when Schier insists that "Precious" should be spelled "Pretciuous" as it says in his teaching manual (104). The extra "t" in "precious" stands for the cross of christ in an anagrammatic recitation. The absence of the cross is not possible for Schier; he won't suit himself to the codes of English that the children try to teach him. His difference earns the scorn of both children and parents by the end of the story.<sup>35</sup> The children's ability (or desire) to adapt to the English ("Englische") culture better than the older generation is a repeated theme in Konrad's book. When Annchen's sister Tina gets married, for example, she insists on many English customs. Her brothers make a banner at the church saying "Wilkommen" and Annchen surmises that "Tina would [like] it better if it were English..." (193).

Anne Konrad's novel focuses on a child's perceptions of boundaries. Annchen's opinions of boundaries are always being revised by her life experience. The boundaries between right and wrong, between English and Mennonite, and between languages are shown to be permeable. Within this thematic context, the ambiguities in the typography, and the presence of interlanguage reinforce the idea that Konrad's use of the non-English word does not contribute to an "us" and "them" boundary or alienate a non-

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<sup>35</sup> Dolitsky points out in her study that the younger the child, the more rigid his or her conception of the rules of language: "Younger, less mature children were more strongly attached to conventional word-to-meaning associations and could not break away from what is for them a fixed preordained code" (72).

Mennonite audience.

6: *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens* by Armin Wiebe

Armin's Wiebe's novel has an epigraph which clearly alerts the reader to expect language play:

My God, how we adored this bugging up of our lovely language for we felt that all languages were lifeless if not bugged up a little.

Armin Wiebe's epigraph announces his novel's project, and points to the source of his novel's spirit. The language spoken by the narrator Yasch Siemens, is primarily interlanguage. He uses Low German words and English words; he uses English words in German word order; he conjugates Low German words according to English grammar, and sprinkles the text with neologisms. The orthography of the text is anglicized: an effective blend of the languages. My Aunt comments that the Low German words are "bastardized, so to speak, forced to sound more English" (Appendix 120). This 'buggered-up' language is not, however, that difficult to understand, much like "Jabberwocky" seems intelligible because it is grounded in English syntax. The reader is able to determine that a certain word is a verb or an adjective based on the recognizable English morphemes in the sentence. Whether the interlanguage in *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens* is symbolic of the Low German language, as it is in *The Trail of the Conestoga* or *The Blue Mountains of China*, is a matter for discussion. E. Dyck assumes that the characters are speaking in Low German, not English. But I am more inclined to think that Yasch is speaking his version of English. My father points out that this word order is quite familiar to him, that Mennonites indeed speak in this way

(Appendix 77). The language in the novel, although it has the ring of authenticity, only seems to be an approximation. Literary discourse is "always a matter of invention and construction" (Ashcroft 55).

Because the text does not use italics to separate English from Low German, the reader is not able to distinguish between Low German, neologism or idiomatic usage. By abandoning the conventional use of italics, the boundaries between languages are erased. Italics are used only several times in the novel to indicate "foreign" words: the words are "*schmallen Lebensweg* (35), "*allein*" (47), *Jugendverein* (121), *Juide frei* (121), and *Wehrlosigkeit* (163). These phrases are High German; the division between High German and Low German still seems to be operating for Yasch (although the languages overlap, obviously). The fact that these words are italicized suggests that all the other words are "english", at least for Yasch.

This exchange between Armin Wiebe and his editor at a conference only increases the ambiguity surrounding the "accessibility" of the text:

Armin wanted a glossary; I refused it. Armin said people who don't know Low German will miss the joke. [Comment from Armin Wiebe: 'Dave, you've got that wrong,.' ] Well, it doesn't have a glossary. [Armin Wiebe: 'I supplied David Carr with a glossary for publicity purposes after the book came out.'] Oh yeah, yeah. You wanted a glossary. The truth is [Comment from the audience: 'Half Truth!']....you've got to handle them like children; they forget everything. (Arnason 220)

As a reader unfamiliar with Low German, I still found the book

humorous. From an examination of the names that my respondents glossed for me, it seems that the humour of the novel is definitely enhanced by the understanding of the names of character in the book. I knew that these names had significance for several reasons. Book reviews by speakers of Low German refer to the names. Also, clues are present in the text which point to the significance of the names. Yasch comments at one point about Shaftich Shreedda: "it is easy to see that Shreedda isn't shaftich today" (5). This is a cue to the reader that the names of the characters are significant in another language. The first time I read the book I had no idea that they "meant" something. There are a few nick-names which are recognizable English too, like "Hula Hoop". Are these the real names of the characters, nicknames, or names for a moralistic fable? My father comments that nicknames are more popular with the Kanadier than with the Russlander, and that everyone has a nickname among this group (Appendix 69). Understanding the names creates another kind of reading of the text, but it is not a hierarchically better one because it is an "insider's" view. Again, the responses of my helpers were not consistent. Names are a way of having plural identities. There are German, Low German and English versions of first names and surnames, just as there are nicknames. This practice again points to the fragmentation of the self, the lack of boundaries, and the definition of the self through texts and language.

Armin Wiebe's novel contains direct glosses as well as indirect ones. Context is always important, both local and general. New Year's Eve church is glossed almost directly in the text for Sylvesterabend (17), but Yasch himself is unaware of the

significance of the title: he makes a pun on "Sylvester the Catlicker". Catlicker can be interpreted as a humorous homonym for Catholic. Yasch's question, "Now why would the people call the New Year's Eve church after a cat in the comics?", reveals his ignorance of his people's own traditions. Is Wiebe illustrating that Yasch has no more knowledge about the real meanings and sources of his community's traditions than an ignorant reader? Just as most readers have enough urban experience to laugh at Yasch's ignorance in Winnipeg, his "translation" of everything into farm implements<sup>36</sup>, most readers would correctly assume that the German holiday is not named after Sylvester the Cat. Yasch is cut off from his own past. This chapter (the Brummtup chapter) foregrounds Yasch's alienation by contrasting him with Hova Jake's grandfather who knows all about the past traditions. When the grandfather is dumped from the truck rides, the young people go across the border toward the U.S., and toward the T.V. tower, source of the siege of "Canadian culture" by American mass culture. The lack of any references to Mennonites, only to Flat Germans is "...an indication of the progressive secularization of the Mennonites, who here distinguish themselves from the majority only through their linguistic otherness" (Strauss 103).

As Michael Strauss points out in his article "A Second Look at Yasch Siemens", "the clearest indication of the decreasing influence of the Mennonite world view on Yasch and his increasing assimilation into Canadian context is evident in the development of his language" (Strauss 112). Yasch's language changes throughout

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<sup>36</sup> Yasch's description of the "bale loader stairs" in Eatons (107) is one of my favourites.



the novel. The big threat to the elimination of the Flat German culture is not "mainstream" Canadian culture, but the American culture that lies just over the border at Gutenthal. The crossing of boundaries is a key theme in the novel. In the first story, Yasch's sexual initiation takes place while going over the border to the States. He thinks that maybe he should save this for Fleeda Shreedda instead of Schups (whose name might mean "push" according to several of my respondents [Appendix 70]). But the boundary between the countries is not guarded though; there is only a ditch that the couple walk over (11). The permeability of this particular boundary is the problem. The T.V. tower transmits mass American culture to its audience. At the end of the novel Yasch is not going to get a colour T.V. and a satellite dish, because "in these troubled times you have to watch out" (176). Ironically the fact that his language has calmed down indicates that he has already lost what (perhaps) he was trying to preserve. Yasch's son, Doft, calls him "Papuh" (170), not "futtachi", which is the endearing term for a parent that Yasch used with his father. After 12 years Yasch has been changed by mass culture.

The invasion of American values is also represented by the "States women" who visit Knibble Thiessen and result in his thinking a little too highly of himself:

Knibble Thiessen is getting to be a real spitz poop. His sign doesn't say 'Bone Setter'; it says 'Knockenartzzt' in German letters, and then 'General Massage'. (35)

"Bone setter" would be good enough for the Flat Germans around to know what his occupation is. Thiessen's use of High German (and gothic characters) is meant to impress both the Flat Germans and

the States Women for whom the ethnicity of Knibble Thiessen might be a drawing card. (Ironically, Thiessen's newest addition of foot massage is a skill that he learned in California. [36])<sup>37</sup>

Michael Strauss laments that Armin Wiebe's novel is not more widely accepted:

Unfortunately *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens* 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...." (Strauss 113).

As I have tried to assert throughout this exploration, the lack of a stable, objective, "correct" interpretation to the works in question puts the question of accessibility in a different context. The more relevant knowledge that a reader has, the more satisfied he or she might be with his or her interpretation. Yasch's interpretation of "Twa Corbies", however, may serve as a hilarious manual for interpreting the novel. Sadie is attempting to

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<sup>37</sup> The fact that Knibble Thiessen refuses to call himself a 'bone setter' (which would probably appear simply red-neck to the States women rather than exotic) is significant in light of Jack Thiessen's Low German story (trans. into English by A. Schroeder) called "Bonesetters". It begins:

What is a Mennonite you ask? I mean a *real* Mennonite, an unmistakable Mennonite? Well, that's a tough question, a very tough question....A Mennonite is this: a person of the human persuasion who speaks Low German and who patronizes a bonesetter. (64)

According to Jack Thiessen, Knibble Thiessen is refusing to acknowledge his own "Mennoniteness"! The narrator of this story also singles out T.V. as the enemy to a good folk tale: "But that isn't answering your question, which I'll do forthwith, if you'll just turn off the TV and give me a moment of your time..." (64). The Low German word for Bone Setter (which Thiessen/Schroeder choose to spell "bonesetter") is "Trajchtmoakasch" according to the Thiessen collection.

understand the Scottish Ballad and enlists Yasch's help. He explains, "You see, this poem is like it was made up from Flat German mixed up with English" (46). Here is his extended interpretation:

Alane is like *allein* in German. I herd two corbies making a mane. Mane could be like a horse's mane or it could be the Main street. Anyways, the crows are making a mane. The tane unto t'other say. The tane, that's the one with the big tooth, and he says to the other one, Where sall we gang and dine today? Sall is like *zell* in Flat German and gang is like gang in German, only it means not the place between the house and the barn like they have in the old darps. See these crows can talk and one asks the other one where they shall eat today. (47)

Yasch's mixed-up interpretation of the poem comes out all right in the end. It is as if the text is telling us to use all the resources that we can muster; English homonyms in combination with context bring comparable results to German ones when it comes to interpretation. Anything goes. Some of the children in Dolitsky's study were reluctant to hear the "meaning" of the foreign language poems that they had discussed because "it would ruin their personal representations of it; it would force them to see a reality that was not theirs. And for some of them, this could only be a disappointment" (Dolitsky 87). And like Sadie, who is somewhat disappointed to hear that the poem is about "how these crows plan to eat this dead guy that is lying behind this old full ditch..." (47), we are invited to hold onto our own interpretations.

## 7: A Reader's Response

It may seem contradictory to assert that the ultimate effect of the non-English word in an English text is to highlight the socially constructed nature of ethnicity itself. I originally began this project with a prospectus that strongly implied that the presence of non-English words in a text provokes the label "ethnic writer" by the reviewers. Now I have come to claim that the presence of these words in texts questions the binaries of "ethnic" versus "mainstream", "us" versus "them". The personal nature of my research and my own position as both inside and outside of the Mennonite community<sup>38</sup> contributes to my development of a theory that asserts that the boundaries between cultures are permeable and socially constructed. Walter Benn Michael's summation of interpretation hold true: we can choose our interpretations, but not the range from which we choose (199).

Given that my interpretation is fuelled by my own sense of a fragmented identity, are there other reasons to explain these patterns in the texts of Canadian Mennonites? Magdalene Redekop argues that the language techniques of Rudy Wiebe stem from his background in a polyglot community:

In Canadian Mennonite communities of the recent past, English

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<sup>38</sup> Both my parents grew up as Mennonites, but my brother and I grew up outside of the Mennonite community, not speaking German (although my parents tried to bribe us into learning it when we were children), and not attending a Mennonite church. Am I a Mennonite? The problem of the identity of the later generations is highlighted in Rudy Wiebe's "The Black Vulture" in *Blue Mountains of China* and also in the introduction to a book produced by the Mennonite Literary Society in part to preserve Mennonite heritage and designed to "appeal [to] a new generation of English readers...." (Al Reimer 3).

was the language of education and literature; High German, the language of the Bible was for use in the church, and Low German was for everyday life. According to George Steiner, this sense of languages simultaneously available for use in different contexts is what distinguishes the polyglot from the bilingual experience of knowing a second language". ("Translated" 98)

The authors whom I discuss straddle many cultures<sup>39</sup>. Di Brandt's comments illustrate some of the contexts from which writers write: "i hate having to choose between my inherited identity & my life: traditional Mennonite versus contemporary Canadian woman writer, yet how can i be both & not fly apart?" (183). The polyglot experience of Rudy Wiebe, Anne Konrad, and Armin Wiebe is evident in their novels' use of language. But as Di Brandt's comments suggest, the marriage between cultures, the permeability of boundaries, is not always easy. My comments on the background of these authors, their polyglot experience, is a return to the question of authorial intention. Authors, however, become readers of their own work, along with the public.<sup>40</sup> Memory itself is reconstruction of the past, imperfect; and the self is always embedded in a context. Memory cannot be treated as objective, absolute truth.<sup>41</sup> I agree with Culler that "interpretation should

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<sup>39</sup> I use the word "many" because gender, ethnicity, class, etc. can be considered different "cultures" or "subcultures".

<sup>40</sup> I read my journal entries and old essays and cannot recall having written phrases in them. Can I then absolutely interpret what I "intended" by them?

<sup>41</sup> This assertion can lead to difficulty in a legal case. But I am not saying that memory is "untrue", and therefore unreliable, but that it is reconstructed in the present.

transform the world, not merely attempt to recover a past...." (109).

I disagree, however, with Arnason's arrogant claim that authors need to be treated like children (220). Their interpretations should not be hierarchically placed above those of other readers; nor should they be placed below. The identity of an author is important. According to Lorrigio, the author's signature is the only way of identifying an ethnic work: "an ethnic work is a work written by someone who, in a particular society, is perceived to be ethnic" (55). Authorship is a significant code along with the rest of the text. We never write or read from a position which is objective: "...there is never a moment when we are not in the grip of some value-system, never a statement we make that is not value-laden" (Tompkins xxv). In the ideal world, a democracy of interpretation and readers would exist. This world, however, is certainly not ideal. Thus, the opinions of authors who "in a particular society [are] perceived as ethnic" should be examined in light of social prejudices and hierarchies which *already* exist. Mennonites have been persecuted and Mennonites have persecuted. They have tried to maintain boundaries and they have tried to abolish boundaries. I do not claim that the literature of contemporary Canadian Mennonites is "universal" (I have tried to show that "universality" does not exist) but only that the literature reflects the interpenetration of cultures, and the fragmented nature of identity. I do not deny that a language, "Plautdietsch", exists, that people can understand it and communicate in it, but I do affirm that its use in Mennonite Canadian fiction does not produce a binary split between cultures.

This language strategy, the fusion of languages, creates a "text of bliss" from the Barthesian perspective:

Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts, ...unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his [or her] tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language" (14).

These texts may not bring every reader's relationship with language to a *crisis*, nor will every reader find a crisis, no matter what kind, desirable. In addition to the question "Kjenn jie noch plautdietsch?", these texts ask the reader the (perhaps) more discomforting question: "do you know english?"

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## Appendix: Readers' Responses

Although I have argued that a reader is free to interpret texts without the aid of a glossary, the aim of this appendix is to create a pluralistic glossary for the curious, those interested in the contexts and readings of others. In this interest, I have attempted to tabulate the results of my questionnaires. I gave my "volunteers" lists of words, some in context and some not. Even though some words and phrases were glossed directly in the text, I wanted to see how my respondents would "gloss" the words. Please note that two versions of the questionnaire exist. I felt free to foist an extremely long version on my parents, while the rest of the respondents received a shortened version, which also has more words displayed in contexts. My questionnaire is displayed in Bold Courier type; responses are displayed in Roman unbolded type. The number on the far left indicates the page on which the word first (mostly) appears in the text. My editorial efforts are marked with square brackets to indicate omissions and/or changes to protect the innocent. After all, I am not sure that my respondents knew what they were getting into!

### Respondents:

- (A) My father (Edward G. Janzen): knows Low German (Plautdietsch) by ear, but never actually spoke it because High German was considered the language of education. His parents spoke Low German to each other but High German to the children.
- (B) My mother (H. Susan Janzen): spoke Low German in her

teen years while attending high school and staying with a family that spoke mostly Low German. She thinks that Low German is the language of adults, that children were spoken to in High German.

(C) Father's sister (Winona Rempel) and her husband (William Rempel) (my Aunt and Uncle): My Aunt spoke Low German while staying with a family who spoke mostly Low German. Her parents spoke Low German to each other but High German to her. My Uncle has spoken Low German since he was a child.

(D) Helpful Friend (G. Helms): German national who does not know Mennonite Plautdietsch but is familiar with other forms of the language.

Note: All of my respondents know High German. My mother and father did not talk about the questionnaires with each other until they were finished.

My responses to the language do not appear as part of the questionnaire, but rather as the substance (in part) of this study.

My own background: I lack a knowledge of Low German and have a limited knowledge of German through University study.

**Please explain what the following words and phrases mean, and include any associations that they have for you if any. If you don't recognize the word or half-recognize it, please say so, and then guess at its meaning if you can. Indicate what language you think it is in, if it isn't in English. If you think that the word should be spelled differently, mention this point, and hazard a spelling. Please note that ANY responses that you make are useful to me whether you think they are "right" or not. Some of the following references aren't language references but historical references that might have significance to you. Use the back of the page if you need to! Don't use the dictionary! (Unless you feel you must, then indicate which words you looked up!)**

*The Salvation of Yasch Siemens*

(C) We've both read it some years back.

**Names: Do these names mean anything? Do they seem normal, strange?**

(A) These names are mostly "nick-names" joined with the last name of the individual, like Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible, Jack the Ripper. I don't know why nick-names are created often first for children and then/also for adults e.g. my nickname as a child in early grade school was EDDA. I don't know where it came from. My childhood name was Eddie which my family called me. We called you Bethy-mow sometimes but I don't know why. [....] This is how I remember nick-names among the Mennonites. Among us (Ruslander) it was rarely apparent but among the Canadia who spoke much more low German it was always there. My friend [H. K.] loved to create these stories which pointed fun at someone particularly with nick-names. Some stories (and poems) were vulgar and pornographic. I remember only one (see later). I guess nick-names might arise because of some incident, some habit or skill, some attribute etc. Some individuals might like their handle; other[s] likely not. [....]

(B) They are all low German. [...] they are rhyming names which could be descriptive but not complimentary.

**1 Shaftich Shreeda**

(A) Shreeda is the name Schröder or Schroeder, a german last name fairly common in some Mennonite circles. It itself means to shred, grind or pulverize. Shaftich is much more difficult to translate although I know the meaning well in the low German: able to accomplish things, active, bustling, comes from work, or working, able to work, and in particular has the wherewithall to work things out.

(B) low German. Shaftich indicates he was a happy man.

**2 Shtemm Gaufel Friesen**

(A) Friesen is the last name Friesen; Shtemm means voice or pitch; Gaufel is fork; thus "pitch fork Friesen" but more correctly "tuning fork Friesen". Maybe this Friesen (probably Mr.) was able to get a pitch for singing from a tuning fork (not a mean feat in itself) perhaps for the church choir [...] for the congregation. Maybe he was the "Fursänger" elected by the church membership to lead the singing. If there was no piano, or no pianist someone would have to strike a pitch. The tuning fork would be useful to someone who knew how to use it.

(B) low German--meaning "tuning fork"--perhaps he was versanger--a person who would give the pitch for the songs to be sung in church.

(C) L.G. Tuning fork Friesen; probably related to his being director of a choir

**3 Yut Yut Leeven**

(A) Leeven is Loewen or Löwen a german Mennonite last name. I have no idea what "Yut Yut" is. Not a clue. YUTA or YUTTA was a woman's name which I think means Katie.

- (B) low G--is how you pronounce the letter J. J.J. Loewen  
 (C) L.G. J.J. Loewen; j is pronounced or called "yut" in Low German.  
 (D) (? good life)

### 3 Shtramel Stoezs

- (A) Stoezs probably is a last name, Stözs, but I have never known anyone by this name. I don't know what Shtramel is. In high German "Shtram" is good looking or well-dressed. I can't get a connection to decide whether this may fit.  
 (B) low G. Shtramel means strip or very thin.

### 3 Shups Stoezs

- (A) Stoezs, Sözs is a last name. Shups was something women wore. I think it was a bun of hair on the back of the head--a braid wound around a center held together with pins? Were these a couple--Shtramel Stoezs and Shups Stoezs?  
 (B) low G. "Shups" means to push. Stoezs is the name.  
 (C) L.G. Shups is the bun on the back of a woman's head; also giving someone a "shups" is giving a push rather abruptly.  
 (D) "Push" (Schußsen, stoßen)

### 3 Hova Jake

- (A) Jake is the first name of a guy. Hova is oats so I guess Jake was known to be a good oats grower.  
 (B) low G--"Hova"--oats, just a nick name.  
 (C) L.G. Oats Jake

### 8 Hingst Heinrichs

- (A) Heinrichs is a last name; Hingst is a male horse I think, a stallion? On the next page is the word "Kunta" but I can't remember the exact meaning of these words. I think they are both male horses but maybe one is castrated like not every male cow is a bull. "Hingst" or "Kunta" were never explained to me because an explanation would involve sex (I guess) and since I didn't grow up on an animal farm it passed me by. My guess is the combination "Hingst Heinrichs" had some special meaning. The obvious would be that he owned a male horse capable of mating with a female horse (mare I guess). Whether Heinrichs was himself as virile as a stallion is an interesting thought. Is there a connection between "Hingst" and "well hung"?  
 (B) low G. "Hingst" is a male horse--Heinrichs probably took his stud around the community servicing the mares when needed.

### 10 Fortz Funk from Puggefald

- (A) Funk is a last name (my good friend whose girl-friend and Susan were room-mates in Wpg when I was in Normal School was called Bernie Funk) Forz means to fart; thus farting Funk!  
 (B) "Fortz"--fart. "Puggefald"--frogfield. Imaginary name.

### 16 Penzel Panna

- (A) Panna means Penner. Penzel means brush. Somewhere I think I remember "penzel" being used somewhat for mild ridicule, not as strong as "stupid" but more like absent-minded, fuddle-headed, foolish, immature, something like that. Also I think it could mean

real thin and lanky but I'm not sure about this.

(B) Penzel--pain[t] brush. Panna is Penner. Just rhymes well.

### 16 Kunta Klassen

(A) Klassen is a last name among Mennonites. I would like to note that some names are given here as in low German but some are as in high German; Klossi would be the low German pronunciation of Klassen. Similarly Panna is low German, spelled the same way in both languages I guess but it is pronounced a little differently. How to show the difference? Funk low German is pronounced further back in the throat. Funk high German is said with a smaller mouth more forward towards the teeth! Shreedda is low German; Schröder is high German. Leeven is even more interesting. True low German (I think) would be Leuva. Now the Canadia had some differences in their pronunciation of the same low German words. They added an "n" to the end of certain words, here Leeven where we Russlander would say Leeve or Leuva. Loewen is high German.

Kunta is male horse I think. Maybe this one is the castrated one to keep the animal more docile? I don't know for sure.

(B) Kunta may be a wagon or something.

(C) L.G. Kunta is a gelding or castrated stallion

### 16 Laups Leeven

(A) Leeven is Canadia low German for Loewen. Laups is a young lad, youth or some young male who hasn't grown up yet, at least as judged by someone.

(B) Laups is sort of slang name for young irresponsible boy.

### 16 Pracha Platt

(A) Platt is a last name in high German. Pracha means to beg; hence Mr. (probably) Platt has no hesitation to beg or borrow as in tools, implements, feed, seed or even money.

(B) "Pracha"--beg

(C) L.G. Beggar Platt

(D) flat

### 21 Hauns Jaunes' Fraunz

(A) Frauntz is low German for Frank (My English); Jaunes' is Janzen's (in English); Hauns is Hans or John all in low German. This usage is meant to mean relationship or translated: Frank is the son of John Janzen's family.

(B) Hans Janzen's Franz

### 23 Zoop Zack Friesen

(A) Friesen is a last name in high German. Zoop means to drink but used not for normal liquids but for alcoholic beverages; "zoop" definitely means to drink rather regularly. It does not imply "alcoholic" since I don't think that term was known to Mennonites in the medical sense in the early days. Zack means sack; thus Friesen drank as if the liquid went into him like a sack.

(B) Soup sack Friesen.

### 24 Beluira Bergen

(A) Bergen is a Mennonite last name in High German. Luiiri or

Beluira (it took me a while to get [it] around my tongue) means to wait; I guess Bergen was chronically late. Always someone had to wait for him (or her). (I don't think women were given nick-names (?))

(B) Beluira I [am] not sure.

#### 24 Bulla Buhr

(A) I think Bulla is a first name in low German and Buhr is a last name spelled the same in either low or high German but pronounced differently. The "r" is rolled in the high German.

(B) --just two names [...]

#### 25 Willy Wahl

(A) Willy is a first name for William in either German. Wahl is a German last name in high German.

(B) Willy--William

#### 32 Haustig Neefeld

(A) Neefeld is low German for Newfeld or Neufeld a common Mennonite German name. Hastig means quickly. Neefeld was always rushing or even more interesting made decisions too fast (and often made the wrong choice). Mennonite men were supposed to be deliberate, act in measured steps and give lots of thought to all actions before making choices. "Toe haustig" or "too quickly" was a common phrase used almost with pity when someone "jumped before he looked".

Since I don't know "The Salvation of Yasch Siemens["] (Jack Siemens) I don't know how intentional the following is, but it certainly is obvious: Shaftich Shreedaa--both words start with Sh, the same sound. [....] Is this a kind of poetry in prose? I like even better the rhythm of sounds in

Shtemm Gaufel Friesen

Hova Jake

Zoop Zack Friesen

etc. The combination of consonants and vowels almost sounds like a jingle. I assume it was intended by the author. Wonderful.

(B) Haustig--fast Neufeld

#### 32 Nobah Naze Needarp

(A) Needarp is low German for Neudarp (in high German, I think). Nobah means neighbour and Naze or Naz means nose. The strong implication is that Needarp is a nosy neighbour!

(B) "Noba" neighbour. Naza high G for nose. Needarp for Neudarp which is a family name.

(C) L.G. Nobah is neighbour, Naze is nose. Nosey neighbour Needarp.

#### 32 Zamp Pickle Peter

(A) Peter is Peter in high German; Peta would be low German. [....] Zamp I think means mustard, so mustard pickle Peter (?)

(B) "zamp" mustard.

#### 33 Schlax Wiebe, the himmelshtenda

(A) Wiebe is a last name in high German; Wieb in low German. Schlax is difficult. I think I remember this to mean a long lanky

frame in a young man. Mabye himmelshtenda has something to say about reaching the sky since himmel means heaven or sky; "the" is English of course. Oh yes, Shtenda means a wooden scaffolding to support something. So Wiebe is so long and lanky that he actually carries or supports the sky or heaven. (?) What do you think about this?

(B) "Schlax" is a slang for no-good male. Himmelshtend--sky stand, means nothing.

**33 Schneeda Giesbrecht, the steermaker**

(A) Giesbrecht is a high German last name; Schneeda I think is a tailor or seamstress; steermaker is a maker of something but I don't know what.

(B) Tailor. I don't know what Steermaker is--needs more context.

**34 Ha Ha Nickel**

(A) Nickel is a last name in either German; Ha Ha I don't know except to guess it means to laugh as in Ha! Ha!

(B) high G family name.

(C) L.G. Letter "H" is called "Ha" in Low German. H.H. Nickel

(D) -making fun, laughing

**34 Knibble Thiessen**

(A) Thiessen is a last name in high German; Thiessi in low German. Knibble is something to eat I think but I don't know what? kind of dough fried?

(B) low G slang for Knochen Artzt or chiropractor.

(C) L.G. Knibble is to rub/probe/massage, a mix of massure/masseuse/chiropractor.

(D) meticulously (knibbeln)

**36 Shuzzel Shroeder**

(A) Shroeder is a last name in high German. Shuzzel I don't know.

(B) don't know. low G family name.

**37 Winkle Wieler**

(A) Wieler is a high German last name. Winkle is an angle. How an angle applies to a person I could only guess. I never heard it before.

(B) high German family name--Winkle could be descriptive but I don't know its meaning.

**39 Schacht Schulz**

(A) Schulz is a German name either in high or low. Schacht I think means chess[....] Thus Schulz plays chess.

(B) low G (I'm not sure) to shaft someone.

**62 Schalleboych Pete**

(A) Pete is short for Peter in low German. Schalleboych is low German for Shellenberg or Schellenberg (Dick Toews family name on his mother's side); Thus Peter is the son of the Schellenbergs.

(B) low G. family name.

**64 Tiedig Wiens**

(A) Wiens is a Mennonite name in either German. Tiedig means early; thus Wiens always was early before he needed to be there. Our church had members who always came early; likewise there were some who always were late. We tended to be the latter!  
 (B) low G for early.

**66 Trudy Teichroeb's**

(A) Teichroeb is a high German last name. Trudy is a nice version of Gertrude.  
 (B) Teichroeb is a family name.

**70 Irene Olfert**

(A) Two names. Irene (English); Irani in high German maybe. Olfert a German last name. I don't know it as a "Mennonite" name however!  
 (B) it's a name.

**80 Milyoon Moates**

(A) Ok this is funny. Moates is Martins in low German. Millyoon is million in low German. Thus rich man Martins as if he had millions of dollars!  
 (B) low G--"million" Moates (Martens) refers to a rich man.

**80 A.M. Kuhl and P.M. Kuhl**

(A) I don't get this one. Kuhl I guess is a German last name. I've never heard it among Mennonites. A.M. and B.M. [**I confess to typologically complicating the issue.**] are initials for two names?  
 (B) just proper names which I don't recognize.

**80 Yelttausch Yeeatze**

(A) Yeeatze is low German for Geortzen, a German Mennonite last name. Yelttausch or Yelttausch means money pocket; so Mr. Geortzen had a pocket full of money, always, not sometimes but always!  
 (B) low G for purse or wallet. "Yeeatze" low G for Goertzen fam. name.

**80 Rape Rampel**

(A) Rampel means Rempel in low German but I don't know what Rape is.  
 (B) Rampel is low G for Rempel and the Rape--I don't know about that word.

**80 Barley King Barkman**

(A) Barkman I guess is a German name but I don't know any Russländer with that name. This sounds English as does "Barley King".

**80 Gevitta Ginter's widow**

(A) widow is English. Gevitta is thunder and lightening in low German, Ginter is high German last name; so this means the husband who died was called Gevitta Ginter (why a mix of low German, high German and English?)  
 (B) low G for thunder.

**81 Lectric Loewen**



(A) Lectric is short for Electric; so Electric Loewen in high German.

(B) low G for electric (as in light) Loewen family name.

**82 Klaviera Klassen**

(A) Klavier is piano; so the businessman who sells pianos is called Klaviera Klassen (why Klaviera--I would think Klavier Klassen would be more correct?)

(B) "Klavier" is high/low G for piano--so perhaps she was pianist for the church.

**119 Forscha Friesen**

(A) Forscha means sort of fat, big, well padded, staulky; Therefore fat Friesen.

(B) low G--very sturdy

(C) L.G. Research Friesen; probably used in this context in the book, but "forsch" can also mean big/fat.

(D) brisk, unrestraint (forsch)

**123 Fuchtig Froese**

(A) Fuchtig is an explicative like terrible, awful, disgusting, stinking; therefore maybe an unbearably smelly Friesen!

(B) low G--sly

**124 Susch and Tusch**

(A) I don't know. I guess Tusch does not mean Tusch as we know it, one's seat. Susch I don't know.

**136 Gnurpel Giesbrecht**

(A) Giesbrecht is a last name in high German. Gnurpel is like a joint, something in meat as tough as grizzle. It may also mean like a bump or wart or disfigured part of a limb. It may mean an ornery person (?)

(B) low G--for the hard parts of meat (not bones)

(C) L.G. "Gnurpel" is adhesions/cartilage, the stuff in meat that can't be bitten through; gristle.

**141 Dola Dyck**

(A) Dyck is a Dutch Mennonite last name with high German pronunciation. Dola, or Dol means angry; thus angry Dyck.

(B) Dola--low G--dollar

**150 Yasch Siemens**

(A) Siemens is a German last name in high or low. Yasch is low German for Jake or Jack.

(B) just a name but "Jasch" is not formal.

(C) L.G. Jake/Jacob/Jack Siemens

**161 Doft Siemens**

(A) Doft is deaf I think or could even mean a little out of your mind since perhaps a deaf person appears a little stupid until it is known that he is deaf.

(C) L.G. David Siemens

**165 Lowt Leeven**

(A) Leeven is Loewen in Canada low German. Lowt means to praise, compliment or recognize. It does not seem to fit but it could also be a first name.

(B) low G for late.

**166 Puch Panna**

(A) [.....] Puch means to boast in low German. Thus Penner tends to boast, again a tendency among German people but definitely not consistent with Mennonite "humble" doctrine.

(B) low G for show-off

**169 Yeeat Shpanst**

(A) Shpanst is a Mennonite name I guess but I don't know anyone by this name, only in my Janzen story. Yeeat is low German for Yeerat, or Gerhard or George. My mother always called my father Yeeat--and how this brings back memories from long long ago--she loved him so when she said Yeeat.

(B) low G--shortened version of Gerhard. Shpanst is family name.

(C) L.G. Gerhard Shpanst. Your grandma Janzen called grandpa Janzen "Yeeat".

**175 Another newspaper man with a funny name like Fudderingham**

(A) This kind of expression I have heard before--newspaperman. My dad called the mechanic garageman (see my Manitoba Memories I). Fudderingham is of course Fotheringham because Mennonites like authentic Germans cannot say the "th". My father worked hard to pronounce the English correctly. Our high school teachers Mr. Lohrenz, Mr. Schaefer, Mr. Peters who were not born in Canada always said Fudderingham.

(B) Is this a referal to Fatheringham in Macleans?

**53 Gopher Goosen**

(A) Goosen is a common German Mennonite name in high German and English; Goosi in low German. Gopher looks English to me as in prairie dog.

(B) just a nick name

**108 Fuchtich Froese**

(A) Froese is probably high German; Froes in low German (?). Fuchtich was rarely used in our house if at all. I think it means confrontational, full of fight? I don't know.

(B) low G means sly--"Froese" just being the last name.

**Places: Do these places really exist? Do the names "mean" anything?**

**2 Neche**

(A) I don't know

(C) E. Little town just south of Gretna in U.S.--just south of borders. Exists.

**9 Puggefeld**

(A) Sounds like a name of a place but I don't know a place myself by that name. Does the author make up this name?

(B) low G--no--interpreted to "Frogfield"

- (C) L.G. Not exist. Frog field.
- (D) ...field

**9 Prachadarp**

- (A) This means literally translated, beggar's village. This word could be a deprecating term for a type of village. I've never heard of such a place by name. It's low German of course.
- (B) low G--no--means "Beggar village".
- (C) L.G. Not exist. Beggar village.

**16 Dietschlaund**

- (A) This means Deutschland or Germany in low German and is an actual place, a country.
- (B) low G--yes Deutschland or Germany.

**16 Hullaund**

- (A) This is low German for Holland or the Netherlands.
- (B) low G--yes--Holland

**52 Panzenfeld**

- (A) I know of no actual place by this name but it could be a village I guess. I don't know the meaning of the word. It [is] either low or high German
- (B) high G--It could have been a real place.
- (C) L.G. Not exist. Big Belly field. I heard it as referred to man's belly. Bill says Panz usually referred to big ballooning cow belly.
- (D) ...field

**77 Yanzeed**

- (A) Interesting. This word means the other side, or the beyond side. Thus it's not an actual place, in low German.
- (B) low G. means Other side.
- (C) L.G. East reserve of Mennonites largely settled by Mennos in 1874.

**143 Altwiese**

- (A) This is high German meaning old meadow. It could be a place but I know no town or place myself by that name.
- (B) High G. this is probably a real name of a place interpreted as "Old meadow".
- (C) G. (sounds more German). Old way. We know of no existing town of this name.
- (D) "Old lawn"

**20 "Pauss up that nothing squirts out!"**

- (A) This is the first example of mixing low German with English, a common occurrence among Mennonites. "Pauss up" means watch out, but more interesting perhaps, "Pauss up" was used a lot in conversation for many things even in Religion so that the devil didn't trick you into doing bad things!
- (B) low G. "Pauss up" means "be careful".
- (C) L.G. Be careful nothing squirts out.
- (D) Watch out that nothing comes out

**20 "Holem de gruel! Where did you get that thing?"**

(A) Mennonites had their cussing words just like other people. "Holem" was used in various ways. I guess like "Holy" in English: Holy Cow. I don't know the meaning of "de gruel" but grueli means to scare. Maybe this means "Holy smokes this really scares me!" or "Scary, eh?"

(B) low G. "Holem de gruel" is an exclamation of big surprise. I am not sure about "gruel" (a fright) but it means "something will get you or something like that--"

(C) L.G. Get the scare. Or "get the porridge." Opa says an unattractive woman looks like a "haisch gruel"--millet porridge.

**22 "Vowt vell ye met me?"**

(A) This translated means "What want you with me?" in low German. Also note ye means either a group or the formal version of you (like sie in High German). It could have been "Vowt vellst du met me?" which is directly you.

(B) low G. What do you want with me?

(C) L.G. What want you with me?

**23 "Vua rum best du nich en ne Choyck? Angst die nich dowt kullde Zoyck?"**

(A) Translated is: Why (Vua rum) are you not in the church? Fear you not the cold coffin? Obviously a warning to those lazy about attending church!

(B) low G. Why are you not in the church? Aren't you afraid of the cold grave? or coffin.

(C) L.G. Why aren't you in church? Frightens you not the cold grave?

(D) ? Why aren't you in ...? Don't you have that cold stuff?

**23 "Portzelcke, Fortzelcke, Shpecka Droats Tien! Sylvester chempt met dei Fortz Machine!"**

(A) Translated is : "Portzelche" (deep fried raisin dough balls usually prepared at New Year's), "Fortzelche" (rhymes with Portzelche but begins with Fortz a fart), Shpecka Droats Tien (I don't know); Sylvester comes with the farting machine. I guess this is a vulgar rhyme chanted by children (?)

(B) low G--a pretty crude chant or rhyme about Sylvester. "Portzelcke--new year's cookie, Fortz--using the word "fart" to rhyme--barbed wire "Tien" (I don't know) Sylvester comes with a Fart machine.

(C) L.G. Raisin fritter, fart...made to rhyme with 1st word, barbed wire Tina. Sylvester comes with the fart machine. A rhyme not used in our circles.

(D) [chempt met dei] kommt mit de.

**23 "Opp en desh doa shteit ne buddel bae'a, Vaae doa von drinkt dei shrinkt!"**

(A) Translated: On the table (desk) there stands a bundle (some amount) of beer; who from it drinks he shrinks. I guess the meaning is clear.

(B) low G. On the table stands a bottle of beer, whoever drinks from it will shrink? I don't exactly know what "shrinkt" means.

(C) L.G. On the table there stands a bottle beer, who from it

drinks will schrink. Also unfamiliar.

(D) On the table there is a bottle of beer, who drinks from it will shrink.

**34 Knibble Thiessen is what we Flat Germans call a gooseberry boor.**

(A) Knibble Thiessen is a name with a nick-name; "Flat Germans" means people who speak low German a lot (maybe Canada) since another name for low German is "plat deutsch" (in high German) and plat means flat. In low German we would say "plaut deetsch". Gooseberries were grown as a shrub by Mennonites or hedge but the berries are very sour except when ripe (reddish). The fruit and its products like jam, were considered low value food, not as good as plums, or even as apples, pears or peaches. Hence a derogatory term for Thiessen, namely a boor, simple, insensitive.

(B) I guess Flat Germans means "low G"--Knibble could refer to massaging.

(C) Not familiar--doesn't make sense to us. Flat Germans?--well low German is flat and not tall, hence Flat German.

**35 Even the Flat German ones have often learned themselves away from the *schmallen Lebensweg*.**

(A) Overall meaning is that even those Mennonites who speak low German a lot, have accepted enough schooling to veer way from the narrow life's highway; learned themselves away are three words whose sequence comes from direct translation from German to English. This backwards sequence was common among Mennonites who did not have formal English training.

(B) low G. I can only speculate what it means--low German is often equated w. less educated. The "schmallen Lebensweg" refers to the straight and narrow or the right way--higher education meant to be taken away from the straight and narrow.

(C) Direct oversetting. Flat Germans were often very fundamental in religion & uneducated. It was thought education confused people and drew them away from their simple belief. But even these learned themselves away from the "narrow life road".

(D) "schmalen"--narrow path of life

**35 Knibble Thiessen is getting to be a real spitz poop. His sign doesn't say 'Bone Setter'; it says 'Knockenartzt' in German letters, and then 'General Massage'.**

(A) "Spitz poop" is of course a term for a dandy, someone inflated with himself. "Knockenartzt" is bone doctor. Of course some of these men and women had no formal training but became self-proclaimed chiropractors or "Traichtmochasch".

(C) Spitz poop is unfamiliar, but probably means high falutin. Knockenartzt is "bonedoctor".

(D) "Spitzbub"--rascal "Knochenarzt"--bone doctor

**45 Dievel, Deivel, Dunna, and Schinda! Mustard Boar!**

(A) Again a cussing phrase by Mennonites (also my father used to say "Donner Wetter" or "Thunder Weather" as an explicitive). Here "Dievel" [...] is devil; "Dunna" is Thunder; "Schinda" I don't know; "Mustard Boar" I don't know but might mean a Mr. Boar with a nick-name Mustard.

(B) Devil Devil thunder and Scheister. angry and disturbed exclamation.

(C) **[Mustard Boar]** absolutely no idea. Not used in our circles. Devil, devil thunder and skinner. Bill thinks refers skinning animals in slaughterhouse. We also heard "Go tein Schinda", almost like go to hell.

(D) Teufel (devil)

#### 48 Himmelfahrt

(A) Himmelfahrt is high German for journey to Heaven, Heavenward.

(B) low G. Jesus' Rising into heaven.

(C) G. Religious holiday--Ascension Day

(D) Ascension Day

#### 15 Sylvesterabend

(A) Sylvesterabend is a special day in the year. I've forgotten exactly which one but it's around New Year. Maybe the evening before New Year's day?

(B) high G. New Years Eve.

(C) G. New Years Eve, spent in church being hauled over the coals for all one's sinning during the year. One last good whack from the preacher.

(D) New Year's Eve

#### 56-7 Oata, Oata

**Ossentoata**

**Pesst em Woata**

**Truff ein Koata**

**Truck sich dann bei Becksi oot**

**Funk doa einen brunen Kloot**

**Howd sich dann ne groute Frei**

**Docht dowt veah ein Ouster Ei**

**Schmeickt seh eesht ein kleenet Beet**

**Yowma me dowt ess blous Sheet**

(A) This is a scatological poem, or rhyme which translated goes as follows. Oata, Oata (I don't know) Oss en toata (I don't know but translated could be, like a theatre (doesn't make sense) Pissed into water Hit a cat (probably a male cat) Took his then the pants off Found there one brown clod Had himself then the great joy Thought that was an Easter egg Tasted him first one small piece (Woh is me) that is only shit Comment: Scatological or vulgar or pornographic poems or rhymes or stories were not commonly circulated among the Russländer. I never heard any in my entire life, although Bill might know some. The Canadia I met had many examples all in low German of course. eg. **[H.K.]** I can only remember part of one; it ended like this

dunkel es daut Loch

dark is the hole [...]

grot es de Pruntel

big is the post [...]

Oba nen mut de doch

but go must it anyway

Chaucer (unabridged) had some poems like this, but not quite as vivid perhaps.

(B) A very crude poem I guess we never had that kind of entertainment in our home--maybe the boys did? I don't know. I was reading this while eating a sandwich and it had an adverse effect on my appetite-- Oata-- is a womans or female name.

Ossentoata--just an uncomplimentary rhyme word. Pisst in the water. Struck a male cat. Took off her pants. Found a brown chunk. Had herself a big happy surprise. She thought it was an Easter egg. Tried a small piece. Mercy me that was just shit.

(C) L.G. Oata, Oata Oxenpuller (or carrier) pisses in water  
 Hits a tom cat pulls herself then the pants off Finds there  
 a brown clooter Had herself then a big delight Thought it  
 was an Easter egg Taste she first a little bit Complainer  
 me, it is just shit.

(D) that is was an Easter egg tasted first a little bit

**60 Schmauntzup**

(A) (low German) translated means, "cream soup". We never had any at our house. This was low grade food for Russländer!

(B) low G. Cream soup

**60 glumms**

(A) (low German) translated is cottage cheese. Glumms was never eaten straight in our house. It was OK if fixed into something like fried with some spices maybe. Then we called it "glummskoeki" or cottage cheese cookies (but not cookies).

(B) low G. cottage cheese.

**60 verenichi**

(A) Translation is not possible. These are cottage cheese in dough boiled until firm but not too hard in either low or high German. Sometimes fruit was used instead of cottage cheese, like cherries. I can't remember whether this is one of the items learned from the Ukrainian population around the Mennonite villages in Russia. In Canada the Ukrainians also have potato verenechi which they call perogies. You might know that the Mennonite German language was considerably influenced by the Ukrainian language (it is important to note that the Mennonites like the Ukrainians but not the Russians). The influence came because the Mennonite farmers who could afford it (most of the Rüsslander farmers were wealthy in Russia) hired Ukrainian workers both male for outside work and female for inside work like cooks. Hence a Ukrainian cook might try her own recipes on the Mennonite family. With large families mother had enough to do looking after the brood I guess. Certainly this was the case in the Dyck (Susan's parents) and Janzen families or the Janzen family on my side. **[My mother's mother's maiden name is Janzen.]**

(B) low G or High--perogies

**60 I don't even like to eat glumms, except when they are in verenichi.**

(C) L.G. & R. Cottage cheese, in our day dry curd used to fill dough pockets. Ukrainians call them perogy. Our moms all made their own, placing sour milk on the back of the warm stove.

**62 They would play old songs from the Evangeliums book**

(A) Evangeliums is the evangelic collection of songs. Selection of songs to sing which everyone would likely know would be old church songs.

(B) High G. Evangelic song book

(C) G. Evangeliums (book) (Buch) is still around. Our church disdained to use it. The hymns in there were very bouncy, words simple and often gory, & theology fundamentalistic.

(D) gospel

**65 snuddernose**

(A) This was a combination of a low German word snudder, snot and English, nose meaning snotnose; in low German it should be snuddernäz

(B) low G. snot nose.

**73 ...the half ton is schwaecksing from side to side on the slippery mud....**

(A) The half ton is a small truck like a pick up; the chassiz for our Suburban is  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton. Schwaecksing is a bastardization of schwank, or to sway and an English ending "ing". Schwach is actually "weak" but this is not to meaning.

(B) low G. slipping.

(C) L.G. slipping from side to side, especially the back end when the back wheels are pushing, making an [squiggley] design across the road.

(D) ? "schwingen" -- pendle

**77 "...the nurse at the front was my Muttachi's second cousin from Yanzeed who is such a pluida zack that I knew for sure that before the sun went down me and Oata would be married with thirteen grandchildren."**

(A) This is a combination of low German and English. [...]  
Muttachi is mother, said in a loving way, as if small as a child. Yanzeed is from yonder or yonderside; pluida zack is gossip sack who of course the nurse at the front is; apparently Oata is someone's name (which I know from the scatological poem!)

(B) [Muttachi's] low G mother (Mumsy's). [Yanzeed] Perhaps a village called "the Other side". [pluida] Gossip low German

(C) L.G. "pluida zack" is a "gossip sack". She works so fast that by sun down the gossip being spread will have it that not only are they married, had children, but also already grandchildren.

**81 Oata nutzed me out.**

(A) Nutzed has many meanings but all around "used up", "tired out", "took advantage of", "all pooped out", "worn out". Again a combination of German (either high or low) and English.

(B) "nutzed" low German and high G for using a person.

(C) L.G. To be nutzed out, is to be used.

(D) Oata exploited me "ausnutzen"

**6 "Dunner and blitzen it is raining hartsoft again and I can hardly see to the house from the barn."**

(A) "Dunner and Blitzen" is an explicative cuss phrase sort of allowed among Mennonites. Hartsoft I don't really know. My guess it means "heartily", "vigorously"; I don't think it means hard-soft! The phrase "to the house from the barn" is nice "German English". It brings back memories!

(B) Obviously it means v[ery] hard--I think it's low G. because of how it is spelled.



(C) G. & L.G. Thunder and lightening, it is raining heartily again.

(D) [**hartsoft**] hard. "Donner und Blitze" Thunder and lightening...

**89** "And when I tickled her roll of fat by her belly while she was standing there by the washing up pan, she threw the tubdewk at me and hit me right in the face."

(A) This is lovely, beautiful--I like it. I can see it. [....] tubdewk is wash cloth: tub is tub dewk is actually cloth cover comes from diack, a blanket; however tubdewk is low German with the Canada accent (the w makes it so); Rüsslander would probably not have a w sound: more like tubduke (like Duke of Windsor). Tubdewk is a lovely word. I never thought there was so much beauty in the low German language.

(B) [**tubdewk**] wash cloth low G.

(C) Direct oversetting & L.G. [**tubdewk**] direct translation: tubkerchief. Actually, dishcloth.

**90** "But that would laughter everybody just as much and Oata would maybe throw the drankahma at me."

(A) "laughter" would mean "provide enjoyment", a nice use of laugh (!) and drankahma is low German for slop pail; since houses did not have plumbing, a big pail would be placed under the sink. Our house had one; it was my job to empty it outside. The slop pile had a special smell.

(B) [**laughter**] make someone laugh it's low G. Spelling should be "lacher". [**drankahma**] low German for slop pail.

(C) direct oversetting & L.G. In Low German laugh is "lach", & if you say it made you laugh, you say "lachat" (soft ch as in Bach). In direct oversetting (as we used to call it) then, it laughs you. The drankahma was a horrible pail--the slop pail.

**92** **hova grits**

(A) hova is oats in low German; grits is porridge in high German; low German would be hova gretts.

(B) low G--Oatmeal. Hybrid of low & English G. hova (low G) grits (English). grits is short for Gritze (Oatmeal).

**95** "They said you were so old and such a dow-nix too."

(A) dow-nix, I think means do nothing but I'm not sure.

(C) L.G. We would not use this expression, but say "De dowgt yi nuscht"--He/she is worth nothing.

(D) "Tu-nix" / nichts --do nothing

**102** **That kammers you nothing**

(A) kammers is a bastardization of "cummer" or "cümmern" from high German which means to pay attention to, or be concerned about, but in the negative it means it shouldn't bother you, or it's none of your business.

(B) low G. none of your business. it's half English and ½ low G. tjemmert

(C) Direct oversetting & L.G. Englisized low german word as so many of these are. We used "tchemat". That is none of your business.

(D) ? "kimmern" That doesn't bother you

**103 Chinga freow met sukka bestreit**

(A) Chinga freow I'm not sure but could mean "children's woman", freow is woman or wife; with (met) sukka (sugar) bestreit (spread, sprinkled). If my translation is right, a nice woman who loves children (?).

(B) low G children ? with sugar spread

(C) L.G. Children questions with sugar sprinkled--the reply we were given when adults didn't want to answer our question. Always frustrating because the saying made no sense.

(D) ...früh mit Zucker bestreit early sprinkled with sugar

**106 I almost fuhschluck myself because it will cost so much**

(A) fuh schluck is low German for "misswallow" a word not used in English but means, coughing from something going down the wrong way. This is a marvellously descriptive word commonly used in German.

(B) low G. choked

(C) L.G. Taking a breath and swallow at the same time in surprise & almost having the liquid going down the wrong throat.

(D) "verschlucken" choke

**115 "I am you so good"**

(A) Lovely. It means "I like or love you"--somewhere between like and love.

(B) a direct translation from "Ich bin dir so gut" I love you so much.

(C) direct oversetting. No word for love in Low German--maybe "lave" but not used as in English. So "Eck sie die goat" is the closest to I love you, or "overset" as above, I am you good.

(D) ? Ich bin dir gut. I like you ?

**115 "you are me so good"**

(A) Lovely. It means "You like or love me"--again somewhere between like and love.

(B) a direct translation from "Du bist mir so gut".

(C) ditto. There is also no word for depression in Low German!

**121 Jugendverein**

(A) Literally this means translated, youth organization; most Mennonite churches had or were supposed to have a youth activity. The young people would get together, learn some songs to present, maybe some poems or readings: this was presented maybe once a month on Sunday afternoon: Jugend is young people; verein actually means together or togetherness, both in high German. Church functions were formally read in high German.

(B) Young adult's club usually associated with the church.

(C) H.G. Jugendverein or Youth club/organization or? Later we called it Young Peoples' Sunday evening service of song and poetry prepared & presented by youth. Often we would present the program in other Menno churches.

(D) Youth group

**121 Juide frei**

- (A) I don't know this one. Juide might be Jude, a word for Jew. frei of course means free, but I don't know the expression.  
 (B) low G. translated--Jew free but I have no idea of where the term comes from.  
 (C) L.G. Jews free

**153 Sadie and Pug Peters are having a hurry up shrouflint wedding next week.**

- (A) shrou flint literally translated is: crushed grain.(shrou), flint is gun. This is a shotgun wedding, usually because somebody is pregnant!  
 (B) low g. shotgun.  
 (C) L.G. Shotgun wedding (shrou is actually ground up grain)  
 (D) "schrotflinte"--shotgun

**163 Wehrlosigkeit**

- (A) Wehr losig keit is literally "defense less ness", or not willing to defend one. This term is a mainstay of Mennonite doctrine, pacifism, conscientious objector (CO). This term is high German.  
 (B) High G. "Wehrlos" means nothing to fight with. The word describing the Mennonite issue of not going to war.  
 (C) G. ...all full of pacifism  
 (D) --helplessness defencelessness

**172 Buttered out**

- (A) Buttered out means worn out. Origin is interesting. In low German "ut ye buttart" is common for used up or worn out. But where does "butta" come from? I don't know. Is it the sound of a machine endlessly going butta-butta-butta-butta-butta-butta-butta-butta?  
 (B) I don't know--perhaps worn out.  
 (C) Direct oversetting L.G. "Oot yi buttad" is all pooped out.

**1 heista kopp**

- (A) heista kopp means "heads over heels" in high German or low German. Origin? heista might mean "high over"; thus high over the head".  
 (B) low G. stand on your head or head over heels.

**2 shluhdenz**

- (A) shluhdenz means stupid or foolish person.  
 (B) low G--sloppy person

**2 feemaesich**

- (A) I don't know this time. Maybe it will come to me later (?)

**3 fortzes**

- (A) The only meaning I know is farts for fortzes

**3 Muttachi**

- (A) Muttachi is a loving term for mother or Mutter (high German) or mutta (low German) in low German.  
 (B) low G. Mommy endearment term for mother but I'm not sure.

**4 knacking sunflower seeds**

- (A) knacking is low German for "cracking"; knack could also be high German.
- (B) low G cracking
- (C) Direct oversetting L.G. Cracking sunflower seeds, a great Menno pastime. In one side of the mouth & shells out the other.
- (D) "knacken"--crack

**4 qwauleming smoke from his cigarette**

- (A) qwauleming must mean huge volumes as in English quaff? I forgot but Dictionary for quaff says large volumes of liquid!
- (B) not familiar with that word.
- (C) L.G. belching or just coming out in clouds of smoke.

**4 clapper**

- (A) I don't have a clue except clapper in English.
- (B) noise maker?
- (C) L.G. "Claupaht" we'd say in Low German. Rattling would be the translation.
- (D) "kleppern" rattle

**4 beckhouse**

- (A) Probably beckhouse means back house or the outside toilet always in the back of the yard so that smells and flies were as far away as possible.
- (B) don't know but perhaps the backhouse or outside toilet.
- (C) Direct oversetting, Pidgeon English. Flat German'd "backhouse", the biffy or outdoor privy.
- (D) ? Backhouse--Bakery

**4 Futtachi**

- (A) Futtachi is a loving term for father or Foda in low German or Vater in high German.
- (B) high G. some kind of pocket.

**5 dukkat**

- (A) Dukkat is a nice word describing the situation when something (like a Fridge) isn't level and you can wiggle it, or tilt it back and forth.
- (B) a coin.
- (C) [**what the dukkat**] L.G. Not used by our people. Sort of like "what the heck".

**9 I am trying to gribble out**

- (A) gribble out; I'm not exactly sure. We never used it. I guess it could be to nibble out information or maybe just to get along, make do, mellow out?
- (B) I have no idea.
- (C) L.G. Gribble is thinking, figuring out.

**10 darp**

- (A) darp is low German for village; dorf in high German.
- (B) low G village

**10 faspa**

(A) faspa is low German for the coffee and cake/zwiebach snack in mid afternoon between lunch and supper; fesber or fesper in high German.

(B) low G. tea time in afternoon

(C) L.G. Bill's favourite meal. Best known is Sunday aft 4:00 coffee, twebach, or some bread, cheese, jam & then cookies, cakes. Like a fancy coffee break. Some people had them every day & then supper later.

**12 It sure seems like a hartsoft long way yet**

(A) Here is the word hardsoft again; I guess to be consistent with my meaning for the heavy shower, hardsoft must mean considerable, substantial, quite a bit.

(B) We never used this word that way--but it seems to mean "very"

(C) L.G. ....a hearty long way to go yet.

**15 Brummtupp**

(A) Literal translation is "humming top", a top which makes a sound when it spins in low German; it means a person who complains quietly, complains wines a lot in low tones maybe to himself or herself.

(B) low G--complainer--winer

(C) L.G. (if someone called you this as a child you were a complainer or whiner.) We know of these only as to their use in the book.

(D) brummen--growl, hum

**15 Rommelpot**

(A) I don't know this one; noisy pot maybe, again referring to a person.

(C) ditto [We know of these only as to their use in the book.]

**15 Reibtrommel**

(A) I don't know but Reib means to rub; trommel is a drum. Are there drums you play by rubbing?

(B) high G--something for rubbing against?

(C) ditto [We know of these only as to their use in the book.]

(D) "reiben" rub drum

**15 Rubbeltrumm**

(A) I don't know Rubbeltrumm either.

(C) ditto [We know of these only as to their use in the book.]

**15 Brumm**

(A) Brumm could mean to complain, mumbling complaint.

(B) to complain

(C) A person who couldn't keep a tune was a Brummer.

**15 Rummel**

(A) Rummel I don't know except a noisy sound like a low roar with no distinct features, rumbling thunder maybe?

(B) not familiar with that word.

(C) ditto [We know of these only as to their use in the book.]

(D) fuss, lots going on, noisy

**15 Fortz**

- (A) Fortz I don't know other than fart or farts.
- (C) L.G. fart.
- (D) ? "Furz"--fart

**15 Dummheit**

- (A) Dummheit is a stupid thing in high German.
- (B) high or low G. stupidity

**15 Sylvester the Catlicker**

- (A) Sylvester is a name and catlicker is English for catlicker I guess!
- (B) some one who loves cats?--I don't really know.
- (C) E. Could come from a comic strip called Sylvester.

**15 Russlaund**

- (A) Russland is Russia Land in low German.
- (B) high and low G--Russia

**15 Russiche dummheit**

- (A) This means Russian stupidity in high German, or a stupid thing of Russian type.
- (B) high and low G--Russian stupidity

**16 badels**

- (A) Badels are young lads, somewhat derogatory: "daut sent dumme badels" in low German; those are stupid boys.
- (B) low G. a do-no-good.

**16 Stookey House**

- (A) Stook was a group of sheaves standing up, but I don't know anything about Stookey House.
- (B) I have no idea.
- (C) Men's residence at MCI Gretna.

**17 Friewilliges [I admit to a typo--should be "Freiwilliges".]**

- (A) I have a problem with this. In high German it should be Freiwilliges; in low German more Friewelliges. This means voluntary contributions like in Jugendverein. (Youth togetherness).
- (B) high G--voluntary contribution to a program or concert.
- (C) G. That presented at programs, 25 anniversaries etc of the free will, e.g. poems, comments, music, solo etc.
- (D) "Freiwilliges"--S. th. out of free will

**17 Christlich**

- (A) This [is] high German for Christlike.
- (B) high G--Christlike or Christian.

**18 even the calendar is trying to nerck you**

- (A) nerck you, maybe means to fool you, deceive?
- (C) L.G. tease.

**20 Holem de gruel! [repeat]**

- (A) Holem de gruel we had before is like Holy Cow, Scary eh?

(B) low G. Unpleasant wish for someone used as an exclamation when something extra-ordinary happens or is done--

**20 You mean shoevanack like on Hallowe'en?**

- (A) Shoevanack is a practical joke or prank like on Hallowe'en or April Fool's day. However Mennonite boys might play practical jokes on anyone at anytime. Young men were tempted sometimes too.  
 (B) shobanack--low G. for tricks.  
 (C) L.G. We said it shobanack--mischief

**21 Hauns Jaunses' Fraunz**

- (A) We had this one already  
 (B) low G. John Janzens' Franz

**2 that brummtupp is rummeling hartsoft loud**

- (A) That humming top is making a rumbling sound quiet loudly, would be my translation, at least to be consistent with my earlier translations?  
 (B) "hart"--high G for hard.

**22 "Vowt vell ye met me?" [repeat]**

- (A) We had this before.  
 (B) low G. What do you want with me? What are you going to do to me?

**22 "schmuynge"**

- (A) Wow; I don't know but maybe this means to smooch in English schmustre or schmusta means to smirk or smile, which is where I got my guess from.  
 (B) I really don't know but it's probably low G. perhaps it means to butter someone up.  
 (C) L.G. smooch

**22 Fraunz blinkers his eyes**

- (A) Fraunz is Frank, blinkers means blinks his eyes I guess. Actually Blinkers means the side shields harnessed horses have to prevent startling from the side.  
 (B) blinks his eyes.

**24 Her ears will shring**

- (A) shring means to buzz, maybe because someone is talking about her!  
 (B) Probably her ears will burn because someone's talking about her.  
 (C) L.G. Someone talking about you and your ears ring or get red or something.

**24 What is purple gas?**

- (A) I don't know?  
 (B) I don't know.  
 (C) Farm gas, to be used only for agricultural purposes.

**31 schemmel cow**

- (A) Schemmel is spotted I think or maybe a spotted color like beige?

(B) low G. I thought Schemmel was a male horse.

**31 footwear: four-buckles**

(A) four-buckles may be overshoes we used in winter, black rubber with 4-snapbuckles; richer people had sippered overshoes.

(B) probably overshoes w. 4 buckles--they used to have metal buckles.

(C) Overshoes that are half way to knees with four buckles to close up front. Men's wear.

**31 flyclapper**

(A) flyclapper may mean a fly-swatter?

(B) fly swatter.

**31 Booker stove**

(A) Booker stove was used by many (included is our family--see my old car stories) which used small sized coal pieces, booker coal.

(B) Booker is a trade name for a very popular stove used as a space heater burning low grade coal. We had two--one in the L.R. and one in the large D.R.

(C) Had a problem of emitting some acrid stink, but could be stoked with coal for overnight slow heating. We had one, almost everyone did for awhile.

**31 narsch**

(A) narsch is rear-end like in ass in high German, norsch would be low German.

(B) high G. for bum as in anatomy

**32 Is you the bearing loose?**

(A) bearing means bearing, and loose, maybe loose or worn out.

(B) Poor translation from German or mixed up English--Have you lost a bearing? Meaning "you're out of your nut".

**32 ...I got stuck on the field and he had to borrow Zamp Pickle Peter's 4010 to pull me out.**

(A) Zamp Pickle Peter we had already--and 4010 was probably a tractor.

(B) "Zamp" low G for mustard.

(C) L.G. [zamp] mustard. [4010] John Deere tractor

**32 I swear at the cluck**

(A) cluck probably is clock used in low German expressions.

(B) "cluck" low G old hen

**33 Oh, thousand, I have the Steinback Post forgotten**

(A) Should be Dowsent not thousand; this was an acceptable cuss word Steinbach Post is a newspaper; again backward German English.

(B) Translation of the low G. word "Doozent" meaning thousand but used as an exclamation of frustration--the rest is a direct translation from German.

**34 footlicking**

(A) Footlicking I don't know except to imagine it as groveling.

(B) comes perhaps from the custom of washing feet--doing a service



for reward.

**35 rightmaker**

- (A) rightmaker may be someone who made things right (?)  
 (B) I don't know but sounds like a word to describe someone who can make wrong into right--a mediator--

**35 knibble**

- (A) knibble I don't know. We never used this word. Maybe nibble?  
 (B) Could refer to massaging

**36 Huy Yuy Yuy**

- (A) This expression is still common (Winona says it) to mean exclamation, surprise, wonderment, but approving surprise.  
 (B) High or low G. Boy oh Boy oh Boy! used when someone is in deep trouble.

**37 outcallers**

- (A) outcallers, I don't know.  
 (B) I can only guess--one who calls out at an auction.

**37 Himmel-shine**

- (A) Himmel-shine; could it mean sun-shine?  
 (B) "himmel": low G for heaven.

**37 a little bengel boy**

- (A) a little bengel boy; a young, youthful, lanky, immature  
 (B) low G for a naughty boy.

**38 katzen-jammer**

- (A) jabbering and whining like cats-meowing, waiting for milk should be more like katzen-yammer  
 (C) G. cat yowling. There was a comic strip called Katzen Jammer kids.  
 (D) --depressed mood, feeling sorry for yourself, sometimes for a hangover

**39 Corbies...Twa Corbies**

- (A) Twa is two in low German; thus two Corbies but what is Corbies? A name? I don't know.

**43 fire evening**

- (A) fire evening is high German with English; fire-abend is fully high German meaning free evening like holiday or special evening. It can also be fire-tag or special day or holiday. Where the word fire comes from I don't know because it does mean "fire" (in English) as well. Candles in church service a long time ago? Or is it free evening as in nothing planned or nothing to do?  
 (B) low G. "Fieur ovend" meaning resting in the evening.  
 (C) Pidgeon English. Englisized German word Feirabend. Saturday evening when folks quit working & prepared themselves in quite mediation for Sunday.  
 (D) "feierabend"--time after work

**43 you don't have to string yourself on**

(A) I think it should be "you don't have to streng yourself on" in both Germans there is the phrase "an strengen" (high) or "aun strenge" (low). It literally means to strain yourself or exert yourself. Thus "you" don't have to exert yourself ("string" yourself) on. The "on" comes again from the German "an strengen" (high) or "aun strenge" (low)

(C) direct oversetting. Aunstrengi--to put effort into work or whatever.

(D) "sich anstrengen"--try hard

**45 flutzed [my error: should be glutzed in later questionnaires this word was corrected for (C) and (D)]**

(A) I don't know this one; flooded maybe?

(C) L.G. [**glutzed**] stared.

(D) "glotzen"--stare

**45 Penzel**

(A) we had; this is a paint brush.

(B) low G. for a person who is preoccupied or forgets everything--a bit irresponsible.

**45 Dem dry bones, I hear de word of de Lord (like the Blackwood Brothers)**

(A) Mennonites and Germans cannot or will not or do not say "th" sounds. Should be "Them dry bones, I hear the word of the Lord".

(C) Negro spiritual

**48 This come back again burro sits down**

(A) This is another example of backwards English based on German. "Come back again" adjective can be one word in German: "zurückgekommene"

**48 Himmelfahrt [repeat]**

(A) This means heaven wards, to go to heaven, journey to heaven (in High).

**49 "I didn't know you was a france hose"**

(A) france hose is spoken together; franscose meaning French person.

**50 "he drove all over his farm ... looking for the cowfoot so I could stamp the earth down around the posts."**

(A) Translated, "he looked all over for a tool called a cowfoot which would pack the earth around the posts he was placing in the ground in his farm."

(B) I think a cowfoot would be some tool or was he actually looking for a cow.

(C) Bill calls it a "crowfoot". We have one--about 6 ft tall one in. diameter steel bar, very heavy, slightly flatted on the bottom, used for pounding around fence posts to solidify their stance.

**52 laughter themselves**

(A) they were laughing to themselves

(B) high G word where laughter comes from is "das lachert mir" means that makes me laugh.

(C) Direct oversetting. making themselves laugh

**55 Danny Orlis books**

(A) Danny Orlis' books, I guess.

(B) I don't know who he was.

(C) On Menno radio station CFAM Southern Manitoba used to be every morn (maybe still is) "Back to the Bible Hour" run by Theodor Epp. Sat. morn they had kids program with (soap) story of Danny Orlis & gang. I guess there were also books available.

**56 oabeida**

(A) could be "over each one"? I don't really know.

(B) low G--workers (employees)

**56 knecht**

(A) knecht is a male servant, usually young male servant.

(B) high G--servant

(C) G. servant

(D) --labourer / (slave)

**57 onioning her eyes out**

(A) since onions make eyes water, she was crying her eyes out.

(B) crying because of cutting onions

**58 a klunk of earth**

(A) A klunk of earth, would mean a chunk of dirt.

(B) chunk

**59 my stomach is hanging crooked**

(A) it was a common saying among Mennonites (women?) that their aches and pains are due to a stomach hanging crooked!

(B) probably means stomach is empty.

(C) Too empty--hungry individual

(D) "Mein Magen hängt sclief."--My stomach is upset

**60 washcumb**

(A) cumb is a basin, a bowl; washcumb would be low German for a washing basin.

(B) low G. Basin for washing.

(C) E & L.G. washbasin. Low German would be vauschcumb.

**60 Evening in Schanzenfeld perfume**

(A) Schanzenfeld is a village in Southern Manitoba I think.

(B) [Schanzenfeld] substitute for Paris.

**60 proost**

(A) proost: Germans say when they raise their glass, like "cheers", "here's to your health".

(B) low G--very simple or crude.

**60 My nose sucks in a sinus-full of Evening in Schanzenfeld perfume and I proost so hard that one gob of mucus membrane sizzles on the muffler.**

(C) L.G. This type of description was what turned many Russlaender & their kids against the book--it was not the kind of thing they

would say--too crude. Proost is sneeze. We would say "Proosti".  
 (D) "prusten"--snort

**60 panz**

- (A) panz, probably pants but I don't know; panzer is a war machine like a tank.  
 (B) low G--I think is a name for a man's stomach which protrudes but I really don't know.

**61 ovenside of the chicken barn**

- (A) ovenside may mean on the side of the yard where the outdoor oven was? I don't know.  
 (B) ? unless it's the warm or sunny side.  
 (C) I suppose the outdoor oven was on one side of the barn.

**61 snudder**

- (A) snudder is snot, combined snudda (low German) with English (er).  
 (B) snot

**61 consequentlies**

- (A) means consequently I guess, but it could mean more, like those things which comes as the consequence of something--interesting.

**63 she tells me not to be so shittery**

- (A) I think here shittery may mean jittery, not a derivative of shit but I would have to have the context to know better.  
 (B) perhaps scared.  
 (C) direct oversetting. In Low German we loved to use "sheeterich", describing someone with loose bowels, easily scared.

**63 footfeed**

- (A) footfeed, I don't know.  
 (C) excelerator.

**64 Wynola**

- (A) I think Wynola was a cola drink carbonated like Coca Cola?  
 (B) must be a name of a person?  
 (C) How I hate the word. They'd have a hard time with a name like Winona (Mennos knew only MaryHelenAnnaMargaret) & often it would become Wynola, a cola drink.

**64 klingers (the little bell klingers)**

- (A) someone ringing a bell  
 (B) is an adapted word to describe the little strikers in bells.

**66 nip (a type of food)**

- (A) was nip a chip like a french fry? I've forgotten  
 (B) We called hot dogs "nips" when we were young but it was an English word I thought.

**66 Huttatolas**

- (A) does this mean a kind of sect like the Hutterites?  
 (C) Hutterites.

**66** "[she]... rutches herself over to the middle of the seat."

- (A) rutches means to slide both in high and low German.
- (B) low or high G slides over.
- (C) L.G. pushing, keeping contact with the seat; slides.
- (D) (herüber)--"rutschen"-- slide (over)

**67** **those penzels**

- (A) those guys or daft guys, or dumb guys or those characters
- (B) a name used for men or boys usually who forgot something or did something foolish or stupid.

**67** **she shteeapas herself**

- (A) she shteeapas, means to support herself, shteeapa, low German.
- (B) low G. braces.
- (C) L.G. braces--shteeapat

**68** **shnuitsboat**

- (A) I don't really know.
- (B) I have no idea.
- (C) L.G. Direct translation: nosebeard. "Shnuits" is comic term of nose. We said "schneerboat". What "schneer" means I don't know.

**68** **what the hund**

- (A) there is a cuss phrase which is "want de Hund" meaning "what the dog"; here's combined with English
- (B) German for dog--an exclamation for exasperation or "what the heck"

**71** **fuschels**

- (A) I don't know
- (B) low or high German for whispering.
- (C) L.G. whispers.

**72** **your Foda**

- (A) your father; Foda is low German for father
- (B) food low G.

**72** **spitz**

- (A) spitz is point
- (B) high G meaning either sharp or a clever thief "spitzboob"

**72** **the lamplight funkles in her brown eye**

- (A) funkle means twinkling; again a German (low or high) combination with Eng.
- (B) low G--twinkles

**73** **schmaus**

- (A) I don't know--it sounds like something I should know.
- (B) high G--a snack--I think.

**74** **schluffs off**

- (A) ab schluffen (high) means to do a poor job of; scimp; shoddy workmanship, cut corners; hence schluffs off
- (B) low G. something done sloppily.

**75 clawed out of there**

- (A) an animal like a cat clawing in to get traction for more speed to get away.  
 (B) using hands to get something out of a hole or tight spot.

**75 mensch**

- (A) mensch is a human in German (high or low); now in German I think mensch means a very positive opinion of a human being; like a real person  
 (B) low or high G. person Menschen--people.

**75 kompliziet**

- (A) this kompliziert means complicated  
 (B) low G spelling Kompliziert meaning complicated

**75 fruemensch**

- (A) frue means female, woman or wife but fruemensch probably means a female human.  
 (B) low G for female

**75 hackelwire**

- (A) hacke (high) or hauk (low) means hook in German; thus hooked wire or barbed wire; German/English combination hack el wire  
 (B) not sure but it could be barbed wire.

**75 mist-acre**

- (A) I don't know; maybe a funny way to say mistake?  
 (B) high G for Manure. perhaps were they took the manure from the barn for fertilizing.  
 (C) G. & E. manure acre  
 (D) --? Mistacrer manure field

**77 pluida zack [repeat]**

- (A) We had this one: a gossip sack  
 (B) low G for gossip.  
 (C) L.G. gossip sack  
 (D) --"Pludepack" wide bag

**78 angst**

- (A) angst means fear.  
 (B) low G. or high G. scared or frightened.

**78 gruelich**

- (A) grue lich is terribly scared, or very frightened  
 (B) low G--terrible

**78 shtollt**

- (A) comes from shtellen or stellen (high) to steal shtollt is low German for stealing  
 (B) low G. proud.  
 (C) L.G. proud  
 (D) --? "stolz" proud

**78 frie**

- (A) frie is free or marry in low German

(B) low G--free

**79 Omchi**

(A) (beautiful) Omchi is an older, pleasant, plump, man generically speaking maybe like me now at my age ???????

(B) low G--older man.

**80 what would have freid Nobah Naze the most**

(A) frei in low German is to make happy; frei (low German) d (English ending)

(B) "given joy" low G.

(C) L.G. to make happy--what would have "happyfied" Nobah Naze....

(D) er/ "freuen" --pleased

**81 she wobbled her head**

(A) wobbled means shook I guess

(B) shook her head probably but I don't know if it has a german origin.

**82 my necktie was schneering my throat**

(A) schneer means to rub because something is too tight: aun schneere (LOW) tighten the belt or corset to make a small waist

(B) high and low G. chocking my throat.

**83 soldot, soldoten**

(A) soldot is soldier in low German; soldoten is plural in low G.

(B) low G--soldier, soldiers.

**83 "Nun Danket Aller Gott"**

(A) Should be "Nun Danket Alle Gott" Now thank everyone God, a song I think with this title.

(B) high G--name of a hymn

(C) G. "Nun Danket Alle Gott" Hymn often sung in church "Now thank we all our God."

(D) ? alle --Now all thank the Lord

**83 bedoozled**

(A) My mom used to say this a lot meaning just a little dizzy say after a nap or getting up quickly in the morning; could also be befuddled by something else like a persuasive salesman, courteor, or alcoholic beveridge; mixed up as in loss of direction.

(B) low G. confused.

**84 The Dank for the food**

(A) Dank is thankyou as in danken (High G)

(B) low G--Thank

**85 schwaecks [repeat?--no comment from dad]**

(B) I don't know

(C) L.G. sway/swerve

**90 schuzzel**

(A) schuzzel is probably saucer or plate; schüzzel (high German)

(B) low G--for bussel in a woman's gown?

**98 I hear the shtrulling sound**

- (A) shtrulling--I don't know
- (B) low G--not sure--when liquid (as in milking cows) hits the container.

**98 zoop zack [repeat]**

- (A) Had this already
- (B) Low G. "soup sack"
- (C) L.G. a drunk, zoop is impolite term for drink, & "zack", sack.

**99 "I'm all full of mist!"**

- (A) mist is fog; I guess I'm foggy headed? I've just come back from page 21 #148 reminded me that mist also means manure; I'm all full of manure or shit. It could be on the clothes from working with manure--yeh!
- (B) High G. for manure. Perhaps if he had worked in cleaning the barn that it would mean he was soaked with it.

**102 That kammers you nothing [repeat]**

- (A) Had this already
- (B) it's a cross between low and high G. low chemet or high kimmert--meaning doesn't concern you
- (C) That is none of your business. Low German word is changed, Englisized as I call it. Made to sound English.
- (D) kümmern --bother

**102 I am a bit bedutzted about that**

- (A) bedutzted, also means befuddled, but more on the stupid side, screwed up.
- (B) low G--confused and surprised

**103 Honey wagon**

- (A) door-to-door salesman with a honey wagon? I don't know.
- (B) I don't know
- (C) E. Hog barn liquid manure pumped into tank on wagon & dispersed on fields.

**105 Winnipeg in the cellar**

- (A) I don't know.
- (B) I don't know.
- (C) E. Eatons basement bargain centre.

**110 don't be so dupsich**

- (A) dupsich comes from dups which is ass, as in rear end of us, hence don't be an ass, don't be a shit-head (although a little too strong)
- (B) not sure but it's low G--"dups" means bum as in anatomy--I guess "don't be such a bum" could fit

**111 frindschoft**

- (A) low German for relations (uncles, cousins, aunts etc.); freundschaft in High G
- (B) low G. relatives

**117 fromm**



- (A) fromm means holy, righteous, good, humble, nice, gracious  
 (B) low and high G. religious  
 (C) G. Our evening bedtime prayer was: Lieber Heiland mach mich fromm, Das ich in dem Himmel komm. Make me (holy) good; righteous, pious.  
 (D) --pious

**119 schmooz**

- (A) I don't know  
 (B) don't know  
 (C) L.G. smooch  
 (D) schmusen--to cuddle

**119 glutz**

- (A) I don't know  
 (B) low G "klutz" is a big piece of wood--but I don't know what glutz is.

**125 schluks**

- (A) schluk means swallow, as in drinking and swallowing  
 (B) low G--a swallow as in drinking

**126 flitz**

- (A) flitz might mean to flit about?  
 (B) low G--very fast as in a split-second

**127 shmuyng**

- (A) I don't know  
 (B) I would guess it was low G but I don't know how to use it.

**129 But I lawve her**

- (A) lawve is love  
 (B) I'm guessing the word is love--but I don't know why--  
 (C) E. Flat German "love".  
 (D) love?

**136 What the shinda**

- (A) This is a cuss phrase, but I don't know what shinda is; I think shinda is a non-reputable person, bad bad, a small crook.  
 (B) low G. for a horse--"what the devil?"  
 (C) L.G. Expression such as "What the heck" only "Schinda" was not nice to say.

**136 becksishetta**

- (A) (Low German) becksi is pants sheeta is someone who shits; hence literally a small baby who still shits in his/her pants, but also used to describe someone who is young but immature, or who is not thought to be very grown-up, or ridiculed for being too proud before his age. I have only heard this used for males, not females.  
 (B) low G--someone soils their pants--a derogative name calling.

**136 ganz geviss**

- (A) high German meaning completely (ganz) certain (geviss)  
 (B) high German--for sure

- (C) G. completely for sure  
 (D) "ganz gewiß"--for sure

**137 schwengel**

- (A) (Low G.) schwengel is something that swings, a hinge maybe, hook and eye?  
 (C) L.G. schwengel, bengel are interchangeable....young guy mid teens immature kind of rascal.  
 (D) ? Bengel--rascal

**137 shaubelkopp**

- (A) shaubel is bean; kopp is head; thus a bean-head, not too smart.  
 (B) low G--bean head  
 (C) L.G. same as above. Direct translation "bean head".  
 (D) kopf--head --some sort of "Dummkopf"

**137 Hingst yuckers himself like crazy**

- (A) "yuckers" is a lovely word with no direct translation. It is applied to cases where someone works too hard; overworked himself, a common Mennonite trait.  
 (B) hingst--low G being a male horse--"yuckers" coming from the word "yucken" (high G) which means itching.

**139 schaps**

- (A) schaps I don't know. Schnaps is whiskey  
 (C) L.G. same as above. [**schwengel and shaubelkopp**]

**144 shtimm**

- (A) shtimm is voice, pitch, or agree, or plumb as in carpenter work where boards are vertical or horizontal exactly or parallel  
 (B) high G. for agree or voice "shtimme"  
 (C) G. Voice. This not Low German (Schem) but high German  
 (D) Stimme--voice

**148 Then it slowly seepers into my head**

- (A) seepers literally means seeps into my mind  
 (B) I don't know the origin but it definitely means dawns on me

**148 a load of junk by the mist-acre**

- (A) mist-acre, may mean the field or acre where the manure pile was  
 (B) high G for Manure--I am not familiar with the term "mist-acre"--we always talked about mist "haufen" hill.

**150 eltesta**

- (A) Church congregations elected men (now men and women I think) to be eltesta or elders, like in the Presbyterian Church (I was one in Athens Georgia) they had leadership responsibilities in the church.  
 (B) low G. for senior (in rank) minister in the church. "eltester" would be high G.  
 (C) L.G. bishop

**151 pumping all the zirks full**

(A) Zirks are grease inserts where one can pump grease into to lubricate surfaces of machines; this is done when you get a grease job on your car.

(B) don't know.

(C) grease nipple

**162 I'm Yasch, not Jack**

(A) Yasch is Jack in low German

(B) low G name for Jack

(C) L.G. Same as saying, "I'm Karl, not Charles."

**172 Buttered out**

(A) -we had this-

(B) Worn out--I'm not sure--depending on the pronunciation of the U--it could be low or high--the shorter sound being low G. coming from the word butter.

**The Blue Mountains of China**

**7 Urgrossmutterchi**

(A) low German: Great grandmother in loving terms "chi"

(B) high G--an endearing word for Great grandmother

(C) L.G. Great grandmother

(D) "Urgroßmutter"--great grandmother

**7 it was time to make schluss**

(A) schluss (low G) comes from schliessen (high G) to close, or lock; here it means to end

(B) high and low G--to end the speech or do the closing.

(C) G. an end.

(D) "schlußmachen"--to finish

**7 Bashkir hut**

(A) I don't know

(C) ?

**8 frotzen**

(A) frotzen is an ugly face in low G

(B) low G--making faces

(C) L.G. faces (funny or horrible)

(D) "Fratzen" (plural)--funny faces / grimaces

**8 fritz**

(A) Fritz is a name but fritz I don't know

(B) nick name for Fred [...]

**8 friedlich**

(A) friedlich is peaceful in high G since Frieden in peace

(B) low G or high--peaceful

(C) L.G. peaceful

(D) --peaceful

**8 groutestov**

- (A) groute stove is big room in low G
- (B) low G--Big room or Living Room
- (C) L.G. great room--living room

**8 betchla**

- (A) betchla is low G for bachelor, single man
- (B) low G for bachelor
- (C) L.G. batchelor
- (D) ?--"bachelor"

**9 Die deutsche Fibel**

- (A) in high G translated, The german primer book
- (B) high G--the German book that teaches children to read German
- (C) G. We remember it. German primer.
- (D) German primer

**10 bone fixer**

- (A) A chiropractioner, a common "medicine man" (or women) among these people
- (B) refers to a bone setter if you have a sprain or something like that--
- (C) E. chiropractor

**10 Waisenamt**

- (A) Weisen amt Weisen is orphan. amt here means organization or control or office
- (B) --AMT is a position as in a job
- (C) G. amt=position. Committee/organization to take care of widows or orphans.
- (D) Orphan office

**11 hauptcheuik**

- (B) I don't recognize this word at all except for "haupt" which means main as in part or most prominent
- (C) ?

**11 verlobta**

- (A) verlobta means engaged as in a couple planning to marry in low G, I think the male since ver lobt a
- (B) low G--one who is engaged to be married or [verlobt]er--high G.
- (C) L.G. The engaged one (to be married)
- (D) Verlobter--someone engaged

**11 verlobung**

- (A) verlobung is high G which is the actual engagement event
- (B) high and low G--the engagement ceremony
- (C) G. the engagement
- (D) engagement

**13 hof**

- (A) hof is yard in low G
- (B) low G for yard of a home
- (C) G. yard

(D) "Hof"--yard

**13 *Zentralschul***

(A) zentral schul means central school in low G. schul is low G. Schuhle is high G.

(B) low G--college. schule--high G.

(C) G. Highschool in Russia

**14 *sommastov***

(A) somma stov is summer room in low G

(B) low G for summer room

(C) L.G. Summer room, often a little building not insulated used only in summer to cook & serve food, thus keeping the main house cooler.

**16 *ackstov***

(A) ack stove is corner room in low G

(B) low G for corner room

(C) L.G. corner room

**19 "...knowing one Lowgerman word: *awbeide, awbeide.***

(A) awbeida is work in low G

(B) to work

(C) L.G. Work work. Yes that's what our childhood & teen years at home seemed to be composed of.

**19 *schlunga***

(A) schlunga may mean lanky good looking slim boy I think from schlank maybe in low G

**20 *cosheet***

(A) cosheet is cow shit. co sheet in low G

(B) cow shit? low G.

(C) L.G. cow shit

**20 *nuscht***

(A) nuscht is nothing in low G

(B) low G for nothing

(C) L.G. nuscht

(D) ? nischt/--nothing --nichts

**26 *atje***

(A) atje may mean corner but ackstov (above) was spelled differently. this could be plural, many corners in low G

(B) low G for corner

(C) L.G. several....or some, but what? [....]

**31 *schwengel* [repeat]**

(A) we had this; swinging hinge or hook

(B) long stem w[ith] a knob to grab it like a gear shift

**31 So let your *schwengel* nose around--nobody's watching!**

(C) L.G. A schwengel is a handle or lever. Used also interchangeably by some with bengel

**34** *Friedenstimme*

- (A) Frieden stimme is Free voice or Peace voice in high G
- (B) high G--Peace voice but I don't know how it's used.
- (C) G. must be some Menno paper, unfamiliar to us.

**68** *Die Post*

- (A) Die Post could be the mail or the name of a newspaper in high G.
- (B) high G--the post. De Post--low G.
- (C) G. Paper--weekly published by Derksen Printers in Steinbach.
- (D) --common newspaper title

**68** *schultenbot*

- (A) schulden bot I think this is the person elected in the village to serve on the Mayor's Council, like Alderman maybe in low G
- (B) low G--meeting of some kind
- (C) G. Meeting of elders (who had a village position)

**73** *On this sad earth I am a pilgrim,  
And my journey, o my journey  
Is not long.*

- (A) A good Mennonite doctrine that we lease but temporarily here on earth; it all is better on the other side
- (B) sounds like a hymn in high G.
- (C) E. Sounds like a hymn (much like "This world is not my home, I'm just passin' thru." Yeah tell me about it.

**74** *Methuselah*

- (A) I guess this means Metusala
- (B) you know better than I who that was--the oldest person in the bible?
- (C) From the Bible--someone Very old.

**77** *schundt*

- (A) A despicable act or person I think? I don't know
- (B) low G for junk
- (C) L.G. junk
- (D) schund--rubbish

**79** *Liesel, Liesel,  
Dried'ger's spriesel,  
Uppity and thin as a measle,*

- (A) Liesel is a girl's name, from Liese, Betty I think is Liesa? Driediger is a last name; spriesel I don't know. Should this be "thin as a weasle"? I don't know more than what it says.
- (B) [Liesel] is a female womens name in high or low G. Dried'ger's is the possessive of a family name--spriesel "sprie" might mean chaff as in straw--it's just a rhyme w[ith] no special meaning.
- (C) L.G. [spriesel]--whirlwind, dust devil

**87** *Come now and dig my grave,  
For I am weary the wandering;  
From earth would take my leave,  
For I am weary the groaning.*

**For I am called by the holy peace  
Of angels, whose rest can never cease.**

- (A) nice hurtin' verse. What can I say? It speaks for itself
- (B) Is it a poem written by someone who is ready to die
- (C) Sounds like a translated hymn

**88 twieback**

- (A) low G for zwiebach, or double buns Mennonites make
- (B) low G for zweiback
- (C) L.G. Two cheeked bun.
- (D) ? Zwiebach--? biscuit

**88 etiskauste**

- (A) etis kauste eti is to eat in low G, kauste is chest as in money chest, or money bank, treasury.
- (B) eti kauste--low G for eating box
- (C) L.G. eats box

**93 Gently falleth the snow;  
Still and white rests the sea;  
Woods glisten under the moon;  
Joy to thee Christchild comes soon!**

- (A) Sounds like a verse for a song just before Christmas
- (B) A christian hymn
- (C) Translation of one of my favourite German Christmas Carols.
- (D) Leise rieselt der Schnee Still und starr ruht der See  
Weihnachtlich glänzet der Wald, Freue dich's Christkind Kommt  
bald --Christmas song

**96 Names of towns:**

- (B) all in high G

**96 Schoenbach**

- (A) schoen/bach probably a town meaning nice brook
- (B) beautiful stream
- (C) G. Beautiful brook. Don't know if it exists.
- (D) nice creek

**96 Gartental**

- (A) Gartental a town or village meaning garden valley but "tal" is a broad valley or plain.
- (B) garden valley
- (C) G. Garden valley. Don't know if it exists.
- (D) Garden valley

**96 Blumenau**

- (A) Blumen/au means flower, a town or village
- (B) flower meadow?
- (C) G. Flowermeadow. Don't know if it exists.
- (D) Flowers meadow

**96 Rosenfeld**

- (A) Rosen feld means rose field, a town or village
- (B) rose field
- (C) G. Rosefield. Exists in southern Manitoba

(D) Roses field

**96 Friedensruh**

- (A) Friesens ruh means peaceful rest, a town or village  
 (B) peace rest  
 (C) G. Peacerest. Don't know if it exists.  
 (D) Peace quiet

**99 Kirchenbuch**

- (A) high G for church book, Kirchen buch probably the official  
 (B) high G--church book  
 (C) G. Church book. Church register.  
 (D) church register

**101 tschmaking**

- (A) tsch making, tsch is table in either high or low G and English "making" a carpenter who makes tables.  
 (B) schmaking--low G--making noise when one eats--

**101 Those Russlander certainly knew nothing about tschmaking, as they called it in the Chaco.**

- (C) L.G. We said it "tschmaking", but it means smaking & making noise while eating. Russlaender were more refined & had better manners.

**103 song: "Kommt ein Vogel geflogen"**

- (A) translated directly: comes a bird flying  
 (B) high G. Comes a bird flying. I recognize the song--we did sing it when I was growing up.  
 (C) German song sung to little children. Grandma Janzen sang it to Tees & Mart often.  
 (D) children's song

**119 Liebche**

- (A) Lieb che means someone you love  
 (B) low G for loved one I think

**119 toem schinda noch immol**

- (A) this is a cuss phrase quite serious or high level in low G translated: to schinda (something bad) once again (schinda is bad but what it is I don't know)  
 (B) [she adds exclamation marks to the phrase] low G. Go to the Devil! would be a good interpretation in English. [schinda] only is a derogatory name but not devil.  
 (C) L.G. Not nice to say. In our family not used. Kind of "To Hell with you!"  
 (D) zum...noch mal --damn it!

**120 schatz**

- (A) schatz is treasure, also a person we treasure or love  
 (B) high G--a special friend of the opposite sex  
 (C) G. Treasure. Used for little kids and lovers.  
 (D) term of endearment "darling, love"

**121 schlarafenland**



(A) high German schlarafen land; schlarafan is sloppy, absent-minded, scattered person. Thus a place for lazy, unorganized, laid-back people.

(B) high G--Never Neverland

(C) G. Never, never land

(D) Schlaraffenland--land of milk and honey--from a children's book

**121 *bulchi***

(A) bulchi is bread in low G, brat is bread in high G

(B) low G--bread

(C) L.G. or maybe R. bread

**127 *kolkhoz***

(A) I have heard this word by Rüsslander and has something to do with the Ukraine or Russia, maybe means Cancisis a region in southern Russia?

(B) don't know

(C) a grouping, commune farm in Russia. Russian word

**127 *droszky***

(A) droszky is a horse drawn wagon, but I can't remember how many wheels it had, two or four, and how elegant simple or ornate?

(B) Ukrainian word for a kind of wagon or buggy

(C) R. Two horse buggy used mostly in Russia

**128 *Schinda noch immol***

(A) As above--cuss phrase

(B) !! low G. Angry exclamation

(C) L.G. It seems to me perhaps "shinda" was someone already damned by his/her sinfulness. After reading the term several times, somehow I thought I remember it as such---????

**136 *Bengel [repeat]***

(A) A young strapping lad

(B) low G a young boy who has misbehaved

(C) L.G. Bengels are immature guys

(D) Bengel--rascal

**142 *butzas***

(A) in low German butza s is a young boy around 7 years old or so, maybe Slavic not German? I keep thinking its when boys have very short hair cuts in summer.

(B) low G--young hefty boys and lively too.

**179 *what was loose over there***

(A) loose comes from high G, was ist los, what is the matter over there, except the word has been change to the English loose as if not right but which is not too bad for an adulterated expression either!

(B) happened. was los in high G

(C) Direct oversetting. Was ist los? What is loose is directly translated. What is the matter over there?

(D) Was war da los--what was going on over there

**187 That blonde maedele**

- (A) Maedele is girl, that blonde girl in high G
- (B) high G--girl

**190 woat derchfaul**

- (A) woat is becomes, is, will be...derchfaul is diarrhea. derchful could also mean failure as in an business.
- (B) low G. woat what derchfaul used for diarrhea
- (C) L.G. [woat] ? diarhea

**191 fierera**

- (A) fie era is the front of something in low G
- (B) low G--for leader
- (C) ?

**197 darp**

- (A) village in low G
- (B) low G--village
- (C) L.G. Menno village. To call someone "darpsh" is to say they are somewhat simple, slow, crude, perhaps even.

**204 dummheit**

- (A) stupidity in high G. dumm is stupid; heit is some property of.
- (B) high G--stupidity

**205 A halunk in the ditch**

- (A) halunk is a clotz, stupid person with connotation big, large bum in low G
- (B) low G--a bum
- (C) L.G. stupid guy, dumb jerk.
- (D) Halunke--rogue, rascal

**211 foada**

- (A) foada is father is low G
- (B) low G--cattle feed
- (C) L.G. father

**The Blue Jar****2 Sprüche**

- (A) Spruch is a verse from the Bible that children are to memorize. Sprüche is the plural of that in high G.
- (B) high G--Bible verses
- (C) German. Poems, also verses from the Bible which had to be learned by memory for Sunday school
- (D) --sayings

**3 Feierabend**

- (A) Feierabend is a holiday. feier to celebrate abend is evening. an evening to celebrate in high G.
- (B) high G--time for rest in the evening
- (D) --time after work

**6 Tante Reisen**

- (A) Tante is Aunt, hence Aunt Reisen in high G.
- (B) Tante Auntie or women if Reisen is a family name. Tante means Mrs.

**7 Kinderreich**

- (A) Kinder is children; reich is country, land, region, all in high G
- (B) high G. Childrens world or kingdom
- (C) G. Children kingdom. Could be rich in children, but that would be two words....?
- (D) World for kids

**9 Der Bote**

- (A) Der Bote is the Mennonite Newspaper out of Winnipeg; Susan's Uncle used to be assoc. editor or something.
- (B) high G--is the name of a Newspaper that circulated among the Mennonites also written by Menno. also religious stuff about happenings in churches etc--
- (C) G. Bill still receives this weekly paper.
- (D) Common title for newspapers--"Messenger"

**9 Mennonitische Rundschau**

- (A) Mennonite Rundschau is the other Mennonite newspaper also out of Wpg. Der Bote means the message. Rundschau means to look around. Rund = around, Schau = look or show
- (B) high G. was also a paper which came every week a little more interesting to read. Both came to our house. I found both quite boring.
- (C) G. The General Conf. German paper--not published anymore.

**12 "There they come, the Relief - Fraiteurs."**

- (A) Fraiter could mean free loading eaters but I'm not sure
- (B) a cross between low G. origin and English too--Fraite is a verb used to describe animals eating so if used in context w[ith] people it would mean more gobbling than mannerly eating.
- (C) E & L.G. Fraita; fraitash (many) eaters, but impolite term.

**13 stram**

- (A) Stram is high G for good looking, well-dressed, well-groomed.
- (B) very trim and well dressed--high G.
- (C) G. shtram--pretty, dressed-up
- (D) Stramm--tight, straight

**13 Frauenverein**

- (A) Frauenverein is women's gathering, togetherness, like Jugend verein we had earlier.
- (B) high G--women's club in church
- (C) G. Ladies Aid.
- (D) women's club

**15 "prips" coffee in sealers**

- (A) prips was cold coffee but even more probably was the roasted grain substitutes like Postum which we drank during the WWII since coffee was not available. Sealers are the preserve jars which had

a lid you could seal.

(B) [**prips**] like postam--low G--a type of coffee made not from coffee beans I believe--coffee in "sealers" were the canning jars or sealers you could seal.

(C) weak coffee made of roasted [**no more**]

**15 zwieback buns**

(A) zwieback is two backed literally, the double buns we know Mennonites make in high G

(B) high G. means the double buns made by the Mennos.

**21 "Kind, Liebes Kind, hast du vergessen..."**

(A) "Child, lovely child, have you forgotten" in high G

(B) high German "Child, loving Child have you forgotten" I don't know where that is taken from.

(C) G. Child, loving child, have you forgotten....

(D) Child, dear child, have you forgotten

**24 "vaspah"**

(A) "Vaspah" is the snack break between lunch and supper in low G

(B) low G--for afternoon coffee/tea time

(C) G. faspah, that glorified 4 p.m. coffee break.

**28 "Jugendverein" [repeat]**

(A) young people's gathering--we had this before

(B) high --youth club in the church they would perform usually once a month in the eve., songs poems, or plays for the congregation.

**31 I could read the Jerry and Jane primer.**

(A) Jerry and Jane were the boy and girl in early school text books I guess but I thought it was Dick and Jane. Primer is first book.

(B) a book which is used teaching reading.

(C) The book I learned to read in in grade I

**32 "Blitzkrieg"**

(A) Blitz krieg was Hitler's sudden air attacks on London for example. Blitz means lightening; krieg means war in high G

(B) high German--has to do w. World War I perhaps meaning a lightening war--I remember hearing that word but I am not sure exactly what it referred to--

(C) G. Uproar. Even that happened in Germany during W.W.II

(D) --war (short, intense)

**32 The pupils at Poplar Hill School were divided between Mennonite childrean and "Englishe". [note: should be "Englische"]**

(A) children; is it really childrean? Englishe is low G for the English. [I admit to the error!]

(B) low G--the English

(C) G. The Brits. The nonMennonites.

(D) englische (adjective form)

**39 "lutsch"**

- (A) lutsche is to suck; lutsch could be the soother babies suck on either low or high G I think.  
 (B) high G--suck as in candy or a finger  
 (C) G. pacifier used by babies. lutsch = suck  
 (D) "lutschen"--suck

**42 Kinder**

- (A) Kinder is children in high G.  
 (B) high G--Children

**46 Katers**

- (A) Katers are the last name I think.  
 (B) a family's name?  
 (C) E & L.G. Perhaps meaning male cats. Yes! In L.G. Kotash. One is a Kota. Such is Tobi's [my aunt and uncle's cat's] name: Tobias D'Kota

**50 Ich Krieg was. Ich Krieg was**

- (A) translated means: I'm getting something; I'm getting something: I get something literally in high G.  
 (B) high G--What a child might say when he/she is excited about getting something "I'm getting something"  
 (C) G. I get something. I receive something.  
 (D) Ich krieg was.--I get something

**54 Prediger Franz**

- (A) Prediger is preacher, preacher Frank in high G.  
 (B) high G--Pastor Franz  
 (C) G. Preacher Franz  
 (D) preacher

**55 Fromm**

- (A) Fromm we had means holy, good, righteous, in high G  
 (B) high G--religious or pious

**56 Kinderfest**

- (A) translated means children' fest, or celebration, in high G.  
 (B) childrens' celebration  
 (C) G. Children festival  
 (D) children's party

**61 Kirchof**

- (A) Kirch hof is a church yard, sometimes the cemetary I guess in high G  
 (B) high G--church yard

**63 Krebs**

- (A) Krebs is cancer in high G  
 (B) high G or low--Cancer or crabs  
 (C) G. cancer  
 (D) cancer

**64 Begrabnismahl**

- (A) Begrabnismahl is a funeral in high G; it comes from grab is to dig, or grave, begraben is to bury in a grave. the funeral

service included an afternoon meal maybe fasba or a little more like a small dinner hence Begrabnis mahl (meal). All in high G

- (B) high G--funeral meal
- (C) G. Funeral meal.
- (D) meal after a funeral

**65 Rakavashakie candy at Christmas**

(A) only at Christmas were some of these wonderful imported candy available and Rakavashakie was one of these, red pillows containing a peanut butter like hard candy inside.

(B) they were Christmas candy imported from Europe--made w. peanuts--shape of humbug but red w. black stripes--we always had them at Christmas--

(C) R. Yes! Red, crumbly pillow about 1 ¼ in. long, tasted kind of like Crispy Crunch.

**66 My great uncle, Ohm Gheet**

(A) Ohm means an older gentleman. Gheet probably means Yeet or Yeat we called Gerhard before.

(B) low G.--Ohm used as Mr. Gheet is low G--for Gerhard--

(C) L.G. the senior, the old man Gheet, could be as I would spell it Yeat, the short name of Gerhard.

**72 Forstei**

(A) Forstei means the forest where CO's were sent to work in Russia during WWI, hence Mennonite boys cut trees for a government job. Susan's Dad spent some time in the Forstei I think. high or low G

(B) was an alternate service in Russia for conscientious Objectors--my father was not conscripted because he was too small and low in weight but my Uncle served there.

(C) Both G & L.G. Russian organized forestry work for the Menno C.O. (Conscientious objectors)

**75 Norweger**

(A) Norweger, someone from Norway in high G

(B) high G for Norwegian--from Norway

**75 Lehrer Zeiting**

(A) high G. Lehrer Zeitung translated is Teacher Newspaper (if its Zeitung) zeiting maybe. Zeit ing where ing is English!

(B) high G--Teacher's newspaper

**87 Rollkuchen**

(A) Deep fried dough previously rolled hence Roll (rolled) kuchen (cookies) in high G; these were a Mennonite speciality.

(B) high G for deep fried pastry

(C) G. Yum! Deep fried kind of thin biscuit dough (thin as in batter).

(D) .../cake

**88 Verschelpt, Mother said**

(A) literally translated means dragged--high G--ver schlept I think; lost in exile, never heard from again, this is a common ending for many in my father's generation--men only.

(B) high G--lost or during war and revolution taken away involuntarily.

(C) G. Fer-dragged. Taken away against ones will.

**89** *bubbat*

(A) bubbat is the dressing inside a chicken or turkey, a raisin dough in birds in low G--very tasty.

(B) high or low G--a kind of bread used in poultry dressing w. raisins--could be baked as a meat dish w. sausage.

(C) L.G. could have Russian roots. Soft biscuity slightly sweetened dough laden with dried fruits, esp. prunes & raisins & baked in & beside roast chicken.

**89** *pluma moos*

(A) plumma (plum or plums) moos a fruit soup, a thick sweet soup in high G

(B) low G--a sweet soup made from dried fruits often made for Sunday brunch and served w. cold meats because they could be prepared ahead.

(C) L.G. Fruit soup (pluma = plums) served cold. I make with dried fruit mix, add  $\frac{1}{2}$  unsqueezed lemon,  $\frac{1}{2}$  squeezed orange, half just thrown in and brown and white sugar to sweeten and some cornstarch to slightly thicken. Also cinnamon stick & whole star aniseed to flavour.

**89** *Schinkenfleisch*

(A) High G. Schinken (is ham, hip, one side of rear end) fleisch is meat as in a slide of pork ham; sometimes also applied to humans who have substantial hips.

(B) high German for Ham smoked

(C) G. ham

(D) ham meat

**89** *Porselky*

(A) low G for a kind of dough ball cooked in deep fry fat contained raisins, apple or other fruit baked to celebrate New Year's day.

(B) Ukranian fritter deep fried w. raisins eaten only at New Years Day

(C) R. New Years fritters. Made with yeast dough & raisins. Very slightly like Robins Donut Shops raisin fritters.

**89** *Niejohschkuke*

(A) Nie johschs kuke means New Years Cookies in low G

(B) low German for the above--New Year's cookies

(C) L.G. Same thing as above.

**89** *Paska*

(A) in low G, paska is Easter bread, the sweet dense loaf Mom used to make with icing sugar, decorations, chocolate bits, M & M's etc etc.

(B) low and high G. Ukranian Easter bread

(C) R. Mine is made with 7 eggs & potato water & stuff & is so tender and yummy (4 loaves)

**90 the huge cast-iron kettle we called the *Miagrope*.**

(A) When hogs were slaughtered the big cast-iron kettle on the yard was used to boil off the fat and make other large amounts of product like grubbeln or Greben (see below) which was a fatty pork meat which would look like ground beef. [...]. Mia (from mehr which means a lot, big) Grope (a big pan, shallow pot, big tub).

(B) it's already described--used over an open fire outside in summer to heat water for washing clothes or cooking whatever needed to be cooked in big quantities.

(C) L.G. Cast iron kettle standing on brick enclosure on the floor. The fire box was built in underneath; holding about 30 gallons it was huge. We had one in our church kitchen. There the borscht was made for big church gatherings. Big lid went over top.

**91 *wurst***

(A) sausage in high G

(B) high G. sausage

**92 *Greben***

(A) Mennonites liked this and even spread this on bread--but lard, fat, cholesterol city! Wow.

(B) high G--for chitlins? I have forgotten the English word they make down South Beth--out of fat of a pig--they are salty and pure fat--like bacon but no meat.

(C) L.G. Pork crackles.

**92 *Zilkase***

(A) Zil kase high G I think but I don't know Zil ???? kase is cheese.

(B) high G--I think a pate made from tongue of a cow or calf.

(C) G. Head cheese

(D) / Käse--cheese

**92 *Grebenschmalz***

(A) As explained earlier Greben is the fat plus small pork pieces; schmalz is fat, lard, grease all this in high G.

(B) high G--lard "Schmalz" Greben would be what gets too hard little particles when cooking the fat of a pig in a coldron or "Miagrope" and the rest would be used as lard.

(C) G. Porkfat with a smattering of pork crackles here & there. This was a spread for many--never us. Bill says it was a sandwich filling for school lunches--says it tasted okay with honey. Yuk is my reaction.

(D) fat

**94 *Summatime***

(A) means summertime but summa is low G. This word combines a low G word with English.

(B) part low G and part English. Summa is sommer

(C) I don't know--summertime?

(D) summertime

**96 *Leiter***

(A) Leiter is a leader in high G or a ladder as well

(B) high German for leader as in choir leader or director



**97 Reieshuld**

- (A) the debt Rüsslander had for the boat-fare across the Atlantic; the trip debt is direct translation for Reieschuld. I remember my father still having to pay Reieshuld when I was a boy. In high G.  
 (B) high or low G.--travel debt that the Menno. incurred when they came from Europe  
 (D) ? Reieschuld ? travel guilt

**97 "...Heute ist mit uns Bruder Julius Schier von Black Creek, die People's Bible Institute...."**

- (A) This is a typical introduction to a visiting speaker for the church congregation in high G. Brother Julius Schier  
 (B) The 1st part is high G--an introduction--Today we have with us Brother Julius Schier from-- "die" the  
 (D) With us today is brother...

**106 Kinder! Kommt sofort her!**

- (A) translated: children, come immediately here in high G.  
 (B) high G. Command children Come here immediately!

**107 Perishky**

- (A) perishky is the wonderful pastry which is a long snakelike hollow with fruit pie dough [....] in high G.  
 (B) I believe a Ukranian name of a pastry dish usually fruit wrapped in pie dough either in squares or long tube like--always made for Sunday for Vesper time  
 (C) R. Pie dough (I use) rolled out cut in lengths. In middle chopped fresh apples, or peaches, or rhubarb (real good) with sugar & flour to thicken. Dough pinched shut on top gives long as cookie sheet round cylinder. When baked cut into shorter pieces.

**128 Schnetke**

- (A) schnetke is also a food. Is it dough fried? I don't remember. low G  
 (B) low G--biscuit  
 (C) L.G. Rich biscuits, made smaller, folded over.

**130 Kluters**

- (A) I don't know.  
 (B) low G--balls of mud. "Klieter" noodles  
 (C) ? Could be lumps as in gravy?

**132 Klose**

- (A) I don't know; maybe also a kind of dough, cooked or fried?  
 (B) high G--noodles  
 (D) ? -- Kloß / Klöse -- dumpling

**137 Was ist los**

- (A) high G what is the matter? is a direct translation  
 (B) high G. What is the matter "los" means loose in english  
 (C) G. What's wrong?  
 (D) What's up?

**152 Kirchliche**

- (A) translated in high G to church like, church character.

- (B) high G--church like
- (C) G. General conference as opposed to Mennonite Brethern.
- (D) (adjective) church

**153 Tauffest**

- (A) Tauf means to duck under, submerge. fest is celebration in high G hence this was baptism in the Bruder Gemeinde (Brother Congregation) by submerging candidates.
- (B) high G--baptism
- (C) G. Baptism service
- (D) baptism

**154 Gemeindestunde**

- (A) high German. Gemeinde is congregation. Stunde is hour but was meant to be more a study session for members rather than a business meeting I think.
- (B) high G--meeting of the church members?
- (C) G. Meetings for decision making or problems or concerns of congregation or just a meeting to study together.
- (D) parish group

**154 Scheune**

- (A) Scheune is a grainary, a building for storage of grain or implements.
- (B) high G--granary
- (C) Machine shed--was of larger size.
- (D) barn

**155 ausgeschlossen**

- (A) schlossen is locked, guarded, protected, sealed. geschlossen means locked up; aus geschlossen means to lock out in high G maybe excommunicated, locked out.
- (B) high G--locked out as in church
- (C) G. locked out
- (D) locked out (fig.) impossible

**159 Taufling (Tauflinge)**

- (A) Taufling is the young person just baptized by emersion usually but also applied to baptism by sprinkling in high G. Tauflinge is plural. It was considered that everyone was young in the journey towards salvation just after the baptism.
- (B) high G--persons being baptised
- (C) G. [Täufling, Täuflinge] the one to be baptised & several of the same.
- (D) the one to be baptized (plural)

**160 Gott is gegenwartig**

*Lasset uns anbeten...*

- (A) Translated means in high G God is here (gegend means surrounding region) wärtig is genuine, worth something. God is actually surrounding us. Lasset (lets) uns (us) give prayer (anbeten). beten is pray; anbeten is more, do homage like praying to a God on your knees but can also be used for Emperors, Lords, Kings, Queens...
- (B) high G is a well known German hymn. God is here....

- (C) G. God is present--beginning words to well known hymn. Let us pray to him  
 (D) gegenwärtig God is present Let's pray to... church hymn

**163** *Ach, du lieber Augustine, Augustine, Augustine,  
 Ach, du lieber Augustine,  
 Alles ist hin!  
 Hut ist weg....*

- (A) This we used to sing when we played games among us young people (dancing was not allowed). I will translate in high G: Oh you dear Augustine, Everything is done (finished) Hat is gone. (I think this signified that everyone had to sit down or something--I forgot--I remember only holding many strange wonderful girls hands.  
 (B) a folk song in high G.  
 (C) G. Ditty we all know  
 (D) Everything is gone/over Hat is gone... (stupid/silly) --song

**164** *Alles weg...alles weg...Stock is weg.*

- (A) Everything gone. Everything gone, Stick is gone.  
 (D) Everything is gone...stick's gone

**166** *Stiefel*

- (A) Stiefel is boots, as in big black rubber over boots used on the farm to do farm work in high G  
 (B) high G--boots  
 (C) G. Rubber boots which Bill went to buy this week.  
 (D) Boot

**171** *The Jugend*

- (A) the young people in high G  
 (B) high G--the Youth

**175** *Weihnachtsmann*

- (A) Weinachts is Christmas; mann is man or Christmas man or Santa Claus in high G.  
 (B) high G--Santa Claus or the Christmas man  
 (C) Santa Claus  
 (D) Santa Claus

**180** *verlobt*

- (A) means engaged in high G  
 (B) high G--engaged to be married

**180** *verlobung*

- (A) verlobung is the engagement event in high G  
 (B) the engagement ceremony

**181** *Wie Perlen an der Schnur*

- (A) translated: as pearls on the chain in high G  
 (B) high G--like Pearls on a string  
 (C) G. As pearls on a rope/string/belt.  
 (D) like pearls on a string

**181** *Vorsänger*

- (A) vor sänger means before singers in high G. These men were

selected to lead the congregation in singing. They had a strong voice and could keep a tune and find a good pitch.

(B) high G. they would be a group of men who had a good musical sense and would sit usually elevated up front facing the congregation and be leaders for singing and learning new songs--

(C) G. They (always men 3 or 4) sat in the front row & decided which hymns the congregation would sing, loudly speaking the page number & then beginning the hymn (not too high, not too low in pitch).

(D) principal singer

**181 Schnoor**

(A) Schnoor I don't know.

(B) high G or low--like on a string as in beads.

(C) L.G. rope/string/belt

**182 Jesus Christus herrscht also Konig [my error: should be "als"]**

(A) high G, translated Jesus Christ rules as king; als should be; if also it means as an explanation.

(B) "als" --high G--hymn

(C) G. Hymn--[König] Jesus Christ reigns as King.

(D) "König" reigns King?

**186 Heiratsfieber**

(A) Heirat is wedding; fiber is fever in high G. Means hot to tro[t], in a fever to get married.

(B) high G.--marrying fever

(C) G. Getting married fever.

(D) -fever / urgency to get married

**193 Willkommen**

(A) high G for welcome or literally will comen (will you come in?)

(B) high G--welcome

**196 boutonnières**

(A) I never saw this before--I guess it is buteniers as in a flower for men? I don't know.

(B) --this has stumped me! Sorry. unless of course it refers to flowers worn in a buttonhole.

**198 Herz und Herz vereint zusammen**

**Sucht in Gottes Herzen Ruh**

(A) Heart and heart bonded together. Search in God's heart rest or calm, solitude. translated form high G.

(B) high G--hymn appropriate for a wedding--search for peace in God's heart

(C) G. Heart & heart joined together search in God for hear peace. Hymn.

(D) Heart and heart together seek peace in God's rest

**201 Nachochzeit**

(A) I don't know yet. It might come to me.

(B) high G--post wedding--usually held at the parents of the bride I think the day after to view gifts and perhaps to support the

parents in the loss of the child in a way.

(C) G. Day or sometimes a week later wedding celebration (usually evening) or sometimes 2,3 days in a row. (Bill says like yours next morning)

(D) Nachrochzeit--after wedding

### 201 *Nochast*

(A) No Chast is the celebration after a wedding in low G literally after wedding.

(B) low G for Nachochzeit

(C) L.G. Same as above.

### 209 *Schleusselbund*

(A) Schleussel (I don't know maybe a game where you are turned around blindfolded!) bund is a bond or union. Anyway this meant the games played after a wedding. Here the young people could meet and touch hands in various games.

(B) high G--translated as "key bond"--games played usually to music and in a large circle at the reception--

(C) Circle games enjoyed at evening after wedding--time for youth to walk with partner of opposite sex. Instead of dance.

(D) Schlüsselbund--keys on a chain? Bunch of keys

### 210 *Jugens, raus!*

(A) Jugend is high G for youth; maybe Jugens meant the same. raus means get out, go.

(B) A command in High G--Boys, Out! Perhaps they misbehaved or were too noisy.

## *The Missing Child*

### 110 *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*

(A) I don't know.

(B) My, my, (name)?

(C) R? ?

(D) "Menetekel" -- warning

**Please make some Final comments on the exercise. Was it difficult? Did you feel that certain words needed more context? Is there a difference in the types of words that the different books use?**

(A) 1. I loved the exercise; for me personally I learned to love the low G words because they were so efficient in expressing exactly what I "know" they meant. I also learned a lot about the English language in my attempt to translate as correctly as possible. The former is more significant because I grew up with a low opinion of the low G language. This exercise changed my mind and I see what I missed. Please help me to read these books. It was difficult. Maybe I tried too hard to give all I knew but I was frustrated with my lack of knowledge of the full vocabulary of this language. Words in context I think I could understand better--but the combination of vowels and consonants used by the authors to sound a word took some work. It helped if I said it again and again breaking the word at different places. Sometimes it clicked.

Sometimes it didn't. But we never spoke low G. I never learned it. Different spellings of low G words do come out in different books. [...]

(B) Was it difficult? for me not exactly but it took some time to remember. Low German is not easily read would have to say the word or words out loud. Yes at least for me some more context would have been helpful but perhaps a bit much for you to supply. Hope this is useful to you. I guess it's not too neat. Book #1 is mostly to entertain I guess and in low German but the exercise evoked a lot memories--the language is pretty earthy--Book#2--has of course a different purpose--not having read the book it's hard to see--it has more high German-- Book#3--Blue Jar uses words used in connection w. church or religion perhaps more high German--I feel it's written by a woman--just from the words--

(C) Interesting to note that Russian, German, & Low German words are used. Then especially in Yasch (Salvation of...) Low German words are just bastardized, so to speak, forced to sound more English. They then aren't really Low German anymore, but a kind of pidgeon Low German. I've circled some of them in red. The "Kanadia", those Mennos arriving before 1900 were not as educated as the later Russlaender & their Low German was different. They ended many words with n. We said "ate" (sound the e) for eating, they said "aten". For blue the color, we said blau, they said blaev. Our Low German was pretty pure, the Kanadia, (so called because they were several generation Canadian to our parents still being born in Russia) mixed in a lot of Low German and English or vice versa. Then Kanadia didn't roll their r's as Russlaender did in speaking German or Low German, but pronounced them as English. They changed such a word as bed and spoke it as bad. Tho we also "flattened" the English language, never as drastically as the Kanadia, & we thought they sounded absolutely ridiculous. Their way of speaking was always a joke to us.

When one knows two languages it becomes fun to speak in one language as one would in the other. Those who know both catch the strang[e?] sound which makes sense but sounds hilarious. "Salvations of..." has a lot of that. English, German & Low German have all been murdered with hilarious results. Well, it's been fun. Brings back a host of memories & people one loved; situations, experiences happy & sad one is reminded of. I notice I start writing & sounding like the stuff I'm reading & I'm not concerned whether I'm writing good English or making complete sense.

The Kanadia was generally more crude & so "Salvation of...." was almost boycotted by Russlaender in the beginning. I think now the feeling has changed because so much is being written by Mennos, & there is more a feeling of pride than revulsion at present. Even so, we (Bill & I) are still kind of surprised by the impudence of the author. Certainly in our growing up, much in that book would not have been okay to say. Boy, am I sounding simple & dumb. Better stop before it gets worse.

**THANKS A MILLION!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

(A) OK It took 16-20 hours.

## Comments on the Appendix

An analysis of the material contained in this appendix could easily fill another thesis if not two. In these notes, however, I will attempt to provide some context surrounding the birth of the appendix, and to note briefly some of the interesting trends in it.

My thesis discusses the importance of the reader's context. My context as a student attempting to budget time and energy has shaped this study. Thus, the sprawling shape of the appendix is due, in part, to my lack of forethought before I sent out the questionnaires. I wanted to know what the German and Low German words meant to speakers of the languages, but I realized that the opinions of one respondent would not be enough; the result was multiple questionnaires. When I sent the questionnaires to my family I was not yet sure how I would use the results. I did not foresee the massive task of incorporating them into this document. Thus, the repeated items in the questionnaires are not necessarily deliberate; the repetition has, however, yielded interesting results. Because the questionnaires were not conceived of as an "objective" linguistic experiment, no one with a total lack of German knowledge was recruited. I have used the comments by the reviewer Debra Martens, who claims to be ignorant of German, to illustrate the perspective of someone without knowledge of German (see page 16). At one point I considered polling a wide variety of readers for their responses, but abandoned the idea as an unrealistic one given the time factor involved.

Many responses in the appendix surprised and intrigued me. In some cases I was interested to note a surprisingly similarity in

responses when the readers had very little context to guide them. The wide range of responses to other items was equally interesting. For example, my father says that "Dola, or Dol means angry" while my mother responds, "Dola--low G--dollar" (Appendix 75). The difference between "praise" and "late" as responses to "Lowt" is also a good example (Appendix 76).

Context is important to understanding--for speakers of the languages and for non-speakers. My Aunt and Uncle respond to the word "proost" in context as "sneeze" and my friend says "snort"; when the word is presented out of context, my father interprets "proost" as a toast like "to your health" and my mother says that it means "very simple or crude" (Appendix 93). Context may explain why my mother recognizes "schwengel" the second time it appears in the questionnaire but not the first time (Appendix 100 and 103).

Orthography is also important to the respondents. For example, Dad responds to "Feierabend" with an etymology (Appendix 108), but "fire evening" (Appendix 91) confuses him. The difference in spelling between "foada" and "Foda" provokes different responses from my mother. In fact, due to the lack of context, Mom fails to identify "futtachi", "foda", or "foada" as "father" (Appendix 86, 95, 108).<sup>42</sup> Also, Dad changes his interpretation of the word "fuchtich" depending on the context and orthography, while my mother responds with the same word "sly" (Appendix 76 and 75). Armin Wiebe himself varies the orthography of this name between "Fuchtig Froese" (108) and "Fuctich Froese"

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<sup>42</sup> I asked Mom what she called her Father and she said "Papuh". Likewise, my Father says he calls his father "Dad". I call my grandparents "Opa" and "Oma" though.



(123), although presumably the narrator might be referring to different people.

The spelling aberrations (which I have tried to preserve) are sometimes significant. My father spent 20 hours over a weekend working on the questionnaire; his spelling starts to deteriorate, perhaps because of the German influence. See for example, "smerk" (Appendix 89), and "sippered" (Appendix 90). Similarly, my Aunt spells "shrink" "schrink" (Appendix 79) and my mother spells "pissed" "pisst" (Appendix 81). Immersion in the (Low) German language affects English usage. As my Aunt comments at the close of the exercise, "I notice I start writing & sounding like the stuff I'm reading & I'm not concerned whether I'm writing good English or making complete sense" (Appendix 120).

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