Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Akademický rok: 2010/2011

ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Ivan PACHL**

Studijní program: **M7503 Učitelství pro základní školy**

Studijní obor: **Učitelství anglického jazyka**

Název tématu: **Issues of Minority Settlers and Minorities in Canada as Portrayed in Canadian Literature**

Zásady pro vypracování:

Práce se zaměří na život menšin v Kanadě a jejich vliv na osídlování této země. Student se bude zabývat zejména pohledem židovských a mennonitských spisovatelů na tento aspekt Kanady.
V úvodu student nastíní roli menšin na osídlování Kanady. Na základě studia relevantní sekundární literatury načrtne vztah anglosaských osídlenců s osídlenci z jiných částí světa a jejich rozdílný pohled na život v nové zemi. Student se následně bude zabývat židovskou a mennonitskou literaturou v Kanadě, zejména díly Rudyho Wieba a Adele Wisemanové. Na základě primární literatury student prozkoumá odraz vlivu náboženských menšin (židů a mennonitů) na vývoj Kanady a problémy, kterým obě zmíněné menšiny musely čelit při budování moderní Kanady tak, jak se tato problematika promítá v dílech těchto autorů. Nakonec student vyvodí závěry, které potvrdí nutnost zabývat se neanglosaskou literaturou při hodnocení dnešní Kanady.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování diplomové práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Rudy Wiebe, Peace Shall Destroy Many, Random House Inc. 2001
Adele Wiseman, The Sacrifice, New Canadian Library, 2000
Orest Martynowych, Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Years, 1891–1924, CIUS Press, The Force of Vocation: The Literary Career of Adele Wiseman, U. of Manitoba Press, 2006
Rudy Wiebe, Of This Earth: a Mennonite Boyhood in the Boreal Forest, Vintage Canada, 2007
Adele Wiseman, Crackpot, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1974
Canadian Jerwish News, http://www.cjnews.com/

Vedoucí diplomové práce: **Mgr. Ladislav Vít**
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Datum zadání diplomové práce: **30. dubna 2008**

Termín odevzdání diplomové práce: **31. března 2010**

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V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2008

UNIVERZITA PARDUBICE
FAKULTA FILOZOFICKÁ

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

2010 **Ivan N. Pachl**

University of Pardubice

Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Issues of Minority Settlers and Minorities in Canada as Portrayed in Canadian Literature

Ivan N. Pachl

Thesis

2010

Prohlašuji:

Tuto práci jsem vypracoval samostatně. Veškeré literární prameny a informace, které jsem v práci využil, jsou uvedeny v seznamu použité literatury.

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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně Univerzity Pardubice.

V Pardubicích dne 20. 06. 2010

Ivan N. Pachl

Abstract

This thesis deals with issues of immigrant life in early twentieth century Canada and the way it is portrayed English-language literature. The thesis concentrates on the Mennonite and the Jewish immigrant communities and their depiction in the novels of two Canadian writers – Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice*.

An integral part of the thesis an overview of early English-language records of immigrant life in Canada. Chapters dealing with the historic backgrounds to both the Mennonite and Jewish communities are also included.

The main core of the thesis deals with comparing both aforementioned novels – the style in which they are written and the way in which they relate to actual events during the process of settling Canada. Secondary literature analysing historical events pertaining to both communities described by the respective novels is also used to present as balanced a view of the period as possible.

Keywords: immigrant, Mennonite, Jewish, conflict, settlers, Canada, comparison, language,

Souhrn

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá problémy života imigrantů do Kanady počátkem dvacátého století, a jak se zobrazuje v literatuře v angličtině. Diplomová práce se soustřeďuje na komunitu Menonintů a židů, a jak se zobrazují v románech dvou kanadských autorů – v románu Rudyho Wiebe – Peace Shall Destroy Many a v románu Adely Wisemanové – The Sacrifice.

Součástí diplomové práce je přehled literárních děl v angličtině, popisující život imigrantů v Kanadě. Kapitoly zabývající se dějinami mennonitských a židovských komunit jsou také součástí diplomové práce.

Hlavní část diplomové práce se zabývá porovnáváním obou zmíněných děl, styl, ve kterém jsou psány a jak události v nich reflektují historické události během osídlování Kanady. V diplomové práci se cituje sekundární literatura, která analyzuje historické události týkající se obou komunit ve zmiňovaných románech, aby nabízela co nejvyváženější pohled na popsanou dobu.

Klíčová slova: imigrant, mennonité, židé, konflikt, osadníci, Kanada, porovnávání, jazyk

Contents

1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to argue that reading Canadian literature concerning non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant settlers can help dispel the generally accepted myth that settlers in Canada were Anglo-Saxon Protestants and were primarily concerned with issues of physical survival in the harsh Canadian landscape. In reality settlers to Canada were also from other ethnic groups and had to come to terms with the fact that their own customs, religion, language and way of life in general were being increasingly challenged in their new environment.

Two literary works describing European ethnic minority settlers to Canada have been chosen in order to demonstrate the diversity of immigrant communities and their influence on Canadian society. The first novel dealt with here is Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many* in which the author describes life for Mennonites settling the wilds of Canada. The second novel is Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice* which follows the story of a young Jewish family's escape from the pogroms of the Ukraine and their subsequent settling in a city in Canada. The former novel captures a relatively short time span and concentrates on a remote rural community in contrast to the latter, which is not only a buildungsroman, and therefore charts a much longer period of time, but also deals primarily with urban life. Both novels however, converge at some stage during their respective narratives at the outbreak of, and during the Second World War: a time of great upheaval and of impending change in society.

2. Methodology

The first part of the thesis outlines early accounts of settlers' life in Canada. The secondary sources cited are predominantly from novels and letters of the period as well as digital sources containing critical reviews of the above-mentioned literature. Of the above materials, works by Susanne Moodie – *Roughing it in the Bush* (1857), Ralph Connor – *The Foreigner* (1909), and Catherine Parr Traill – *The Backwoods of Canada Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer* (1846) provide authentic views of life of the period, however biased towards British settlers. Moreover all of these works are still being published today.

Brief outlines of the Mennonite and Jewish faiths and their existence in Canada are also part of this thesis in order to provide some background information and put both novels into context.

The primary sources analyzed for the purposes of this thesis are the novels *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962) by Rudy Wiebe and *The Sacrifice* (1956) by Adele Wiseman. Both have been chosen for their reputations within their respective communities. Wiseman's literary output, however slim, is centred on Jewish culture and women in the Jewish community, albeit not so much on the Jewish faith. Wiebe was much more prolific as a writer, and was also a respected member of the Mennonite church. Moreover, he holds a bachelor of theology degree from the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. Both novels are compared to show the way in which they depict historical events and the literary devices used in that quest.

At this point it is also necessary to clarify an issue of terminology concerning the use of the phrase "Anglo-Saxon." Although this phrase does have its ambiguities, it appears to be the most fitting description for literature and culture in this work having its roots in the British colonization process, regardless of the period in history. The term is universally used in this sense in many of the sources listed at the end of this thesis, nonetheless in *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*. Here the author, Eva-Marie Kröller, in mentioning Leonard Cohen, writes about how, "Cohen, […] is illustrative of the explosion in authorial voices from groups that have distanced themselves from the dominant Anglo-Saxon, then Germanic, as well as French,

sociocultural communities which, until the end of World War II, had almost exclusive access to publishing and distribution." (Kröller, 173)

Throughout the thesis, secondary sources scrutinizing historical events are cited and compared with events described in both novels. Although, as mentioned later in this thesis, both novels are primarily works of fiction, they do however describe crucial events in the building of a nation. For this reason it is deemed essential that these events are verified in order to prove their credibility.

3. Literary Portrayals of Immigrants in Canada

3. 1. Romanticism and Reality

This thesis intends to deal primarily with issues concerning two specific minority groups; Mennonite and Jewish communities. However, it is necessary to mention the wider story of how the immigrant is portrayed in literature in Canada. Paradoxically the Anglo-Saxon immigrant writer, Susanna Moodie, serves fittingly as a starting point. Moodie moved to Canada from Surrey in England in 1832. She was in her early thirties at the time and although she had immigrated to Canada with her husband, an army officer who did so in the line of duty, she always regarded the move as an enforced migration. Although Moodie wrote about immigrant life from the point of view of an Anglo-Saxon writer, much of what she writes helps to dispel the afore-mentioned myths concerning immigrant life. In the appendix to her most well-known novel *Roughing it in the Bush*, Moodie states that while the main reason for emigration is the desire to better one's condition, to make a new name for oneself and to enjoy the prospect of one's children being free, she continues that, "Emigration, in most instances – and ours was no exception to the general rule – is a matter of necessity, not of choice." (Moodie, 527) The generally romantic view of a settler's life in Canada is a relatively long-lived one as witnessed by Moodie in her introduction to *Roughing it in the Bush.* In it she writes very critically of the people who were contemplating emigration to Canada that:

> Men who had been hopeless of supporting their families in comfort and independence at home, thought that they had only to come out to Canada to make their fortunes; almost even to realise the story told in the nursery, of the sheep and oxen that ran about the streets, ready roasted, and with knives and forks upon their backs. They were made to believe that if it did not actually rain gold, that precious metal could be obtained, as is now stated of California and Australia, by stooping to pick it up. (Moodie, 13)

The reality though, Moodie notes, was much less romantic. The vision of a land of milk and honey did not, for most immigrants, materialize. But for the Anglo-Saxon immigrants the issues were generally not those of religion, customs or language. For these people the primary issue was their inability to come to terms with the reality that tilling the land in Canada required the same care as back in the old country. Romantic

expectations had distorted the gritty reality as Moodie describes in *Roughing It in the Bush* (1856):

> The early settlers were wretched farmers; they never ploughed deep enough, and never thought of manuring the land. … When the lands became sterile, from this exhausting treatment, they were called "worn-out farms;" and the owners generally sold them to new settlers from the old country, and with the money they received, bought a larger quantity of wild lands, to provide for their sons; by whom the same improvident process was recommended. These early settlers were, in fact, only fit for pioneers to a more thrifty class of settlers. (Moodie, 186)

As can be seen from the above citations the harsh elements of the Canadian wilderness are present in most Canadian writing dealing with the settling of that country. Some works however deal with the urban population of Canada too. But whichever aspect of the Canadian landscape is touched on in this area of Canadian literature, the general message is that of a great nation being built on white Anglo-Saxon Protestant principles. This is evident in most literature dealing with the life of newcomers to Canada. Where Moodie appears to be more occupied with how immigrants cope, or indeed do not cope with the new life in Canada, other writers seem to dwell on the superior qualities of the Anglo-Saxon settler in general.

3. 2. Elements of Chauvinism

Ralph Connor sets the general Anglo-Saxon chauvinist tone for what could be called the immigrant novel in his work *The Foreigner; a tale of the Saskatchewan.* (1909). The novel deals with the transformation of a small trading post in the Canadian West into the metropolis we know today as Winnipeg. The tone of the novel itself is set right from the very start where the author enthuses that:

> [N]ot far from the centre of the American Continent, midway between the oceans east and west, midway between the Gulf and the Arctic Sea […] stands Winnipeg, the cosmopolitan capital of the last of the Anglo Saxon Empires,--Winnipeg, City of the Plain, which from the eyes of the world cannot be hid. (Connor, 11)

To a certain degree the novel deals with other ethnic groups; Germans, Italians, Swiss and Slavs. The Slavs especially are a major motif for Connor's novel. In common with Connor's introductory assertion of Canada as the last of the Anglo-Saxon empires, in

his eyes however, the Slavs seem to represent all that is seedy in society. From the Russians to the Hungarians, all are collectively dubbed "Galicians" and portrayed by Connor in much the same manner: a mass of humanity packed into the northern part of the city. Living ten or twenty to a dwelling the Galicians seem to be satisfied with their meagre lot, indeed Connor almost seems to lay the blame for their ill fate at the feet of their own countrymen. Connor writes:

> Fortunate indeed is the owner, of a shack, who, devoid of hygienic scruples and disdainful of city sanitary laws, reaps a rich harvest from his fellow-countrymen, who herd together under his pent roof. Here and there a house surrendered by its former Anglo-Saxon owner to the "Polak" invasion, falls into the hands of an enterprising foreigner, and becomes to the happy possessor a veritable gold mine. (Connor, 12)

The inference here is quite obvious – the Anglo-Saxon settler would never stoop so low as to exploit his fellow human being. This is a recurring theme in this novel where we constantly read of the superior motives of the Anglo-Saxon who, rather condescendingly, always has the right answer to immigrant issues. In chapter thirteen of *The Foreigner*, Kalman Kalmar, the son of a Russian immigrant, meets up in the Canadian wilds with Brown, a preacher-come-teacher. Brown's role in Canadian society, it seems, is to spread the faith, especially to the younger generation. Brown's preoccupation with religion is evident when he announces to Kalmar and his friend French that he intends to make the children into good Christians and Canadians which are, he remarks, one and the same thing. French expresses surprise that somebody would choose to spend, or maybe even waste time, attempting to educate the Galicians. However Brown explains why he intends to do so:

> These people here exist as an undigested foreign mass. They must be digested and absorbed into the body politic. They must be taught our ways of thinking and living, or it will be a mighty bad thing for us in Western Canada. Do you know, there are over twenty-five thousand of them already in this country? (Connor, 167)

French's reaction to this is equally xenophobic: "You go in," he warns Brown, "and give them some of our Canadian ideas of living and all that, and before you know they are striking for higher wages and giving no end of trouble." (Connor, 167).

That the religion Brown (and evidently the author himself) has in mind is that of the established Anglo-Saxon Protestant faith is quite clear throughout the novel. In

the above mentioned chapter thirteen, Brown speaks of "his" Presbytarian Church and elsewhere in the novel there are explicit references to the accepted faith resulting almost, in some places, in anti-Catholicism. Chapter six, for example – entitled The Grip of British Law – relates the story of a fight among the Galicians themselves. The doctor, called upon to tend to one of the injured, puts the generally accepted Anglo-Saxon view of "foreign" – in other words Catholic – religion into words, in spite of his obvious sympathy towards the plight of the Galicians:

> "[B]ut they [the Galicians] have never had a chance, nor even half a chance. A beastly tyrannical government at home has put the fear of death on them for this world, and an ignorant and superstitious Church has kept them in fear of purgatory and hell fire for the next. They have never had a chance in their own land, and so far, they have got no better chance here, except that they do not live in the fear of Siberia." The doctor had his own views upon the foreign peoples in the West. (Connor, 60)

3. 3. The Greenhorn as the Target

All this however does not mean that writers portraying the Anglo-Saxon experiences of settlers were not interested in the experiences of other cultures. A rather different form of ethnic clash existed in Canada in the later stages of settling that land – notably between the early settlers and new arrivals from the "Old Country." This was however usually portrayed in a rather light-hearted way. Writers, including W. H. Jarvis in his *The Letters of a Remittance Man to His Mother* (1908), J. H. McCulloch in *The Men of Kildonan* (1926) and B. J. Farmer in Go West, Young Man (1936), all use the tool of contrast. Specifically that of contrast between the gullible Englishman: either as a visitor, adventurer or settler with his quaint English peculiarities, and the long-time settlers. The scene is generally much the same in any of the above cases, the "Greenhorn" settler refusing to listen to the advice of his neighbours, or the naïve behaviour of the quintessential English clerk, as in the case of Reginald in Jarvis's *The Letters of a Remittance Man to His Mother*. Reginald is so outraged at the behaviour of the locals towards him that he decides, in typical Public schoolboy fashion, to write a letter to *The Times* warning of the dangers arising from such uncouth behaviour prevailing on the prairies.

These musings are though, relatively harmless, and are more of a satirical nature as opposed to the superior tone taken towards other nationalities, as mentioned earlier in this passage. Catharine Parr Traill seems to sum up immigrant life in Canada from the point of view of the Anglo-Saxon writer in her collection of letters and

journals under the title *The Backwoods of Canada Being Letters From The Wife Of An Emigrant Officer, Illustrative Of The Domestic Economy Of British America* (1836). In her introduction to this work Traill asseverates that:

> [It] is not only the poor husbandmen and artisans, that move in vast bodies to the west, but it is the enterprising English capitalist, and the once affluent landholder […] they [British Officers and their families] are the pioneers of civilization in the wilderness, and their families, often of delicate nurture and honourable descent, are at once plunged into all the hardships attendant on the rough on the rough life of a bush-settler. (Traill, 3)

No one else, it seems, has borne the burden of settling this vast country more than the British.

3. 4. The Deeper Reality

The Canadian author Eric Thompson provides a fitting opening for this passage dealing with the wider picture of immigrant literature in Canada in his article for the University of New Brunswick website (www.lib.unb.ca), *Prairie Mosaic: The Immigrant Novel in the Canadian West.* Here Thompson points out that:

> The story of the ethnic groups and their settlements in the West has been told often in official histories and personal memoirs. But the immigrant novel, as a genre of Prairie writing, has been either ignored or scantily discussed by critics of Canadian literature. The reasons seem apparent. Few of these novels are held to be of solid literary merit; they are felt to belong, rather, to second-rate popular literature spawned in any new area of settlement. Moreover, there has been an evident reluctance among many critics to investigate books by authors whose native language is neither English nor French. In fact, there are a number of Scandinavian, Ukrainian, German and other immigrant novels about the West which have not been translated and which are virtually unknown in Canada. Yet, both these and more accessible examples of the genre do exist; consequently, there is ample reason for studying them both as literature and as part of the cultural legacy of the nation. (Thompson, Prairie Mosaic: The Immigrant Novel in the Canadian West, www.lib.unb.ca)

Generally, not much is known about the European immigrants. From some of the extracts mentioned previously in this work, it is quite apparent that there were disputes between the indigenous peoples and the Europeans. Therefore surely, there must have been similar disputes within the individual European ethnicities. One must not forget that these Europeans were settling a vast country whose natural barriers compelled them to form relatively close-knit communities. In turn these communities,

with their specific languages and cultures, must have had to solve similar issues pertaining to the differing ethnic customs, languages and social attitudes.

Those seeking answers to the above may find some in the afore-mentioned book, *A History of Canadian Literature.* Here, W. H. New presents a comprehensive summary of Canadian literature as it evolved throughout the centuries. This untraditional book situates literature in relationship to national and international social and cultural events. The reader may at first feel a little overwhelmed by all the information at his or her fingertips, but as New says in his introduction:

> To read Canadian literature attentively is to realise how diverse Canadian culture is – how marked by politics and religion, how influenced by differences of language and geography, how preoccupied (apparently) by the empirical world, but how fascinated by the mysterious and the uncertain. (New)

In *A History of Canadian Literature* we can find answers to the question concerning the correlation between literature and the various groups of immigrants. In chapter five entitled Encoders: Literature to 1985, W. H. New pays special attention to a group of writers who wanted to depict the experience of a specific ethnic group in "a series of semi-documentary works that in fiction most characteristically took the form of the bildungsroman or novel of growing-up." (New, 228)

At the very beginning of the above-mentioned chapter, New also acknowledges the assertion made at the beginning of this paper concerning the relatively low importance placed on Canadian immigrant literature compared to that of other Anglophile countries. The Encoders seem to have been the most influential writers in attempting to depict non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant life in Canada. Writing in retrospect or from personal experience these authors seemingly set the pattern which was to become the standard from the 1960s all the way through to the mid 1980s. Novels and poetry dealing with French immigrant issues, Catholicism, and politics faced fierce competition from literary works dealing with a myriad of further issues concerning the Jewish and Mennonite faiths, war and peace and, later on in the period, progress and technology versus society, and eventually even homosexuality.

To scrutinize every author in this period is not the purpose of this paper – all in some way or another deserve merit for their literary contribution. But in order to address the issues mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, it is fitting to mention some specific authors. Although Margaret Attwood and Leonard Cohen – to mention a

few well-known names – were also influential writers among the "Decoders", they did in essence "jump on the bandwagon." In seeking prominent pioneers in this field, the Mennonite author, Rudy Wiebe, and the Jewish author, Adele Wiseman, seem to be suitable candidates. The significance of Wiebe's writing is in that he portrays not only a devout Mennonite community determined to survive in the hostile Canadian landscape, but also the clash between the old and the new orders. Wiseman, on the other hand, seems to be more preoccupied with how a minority, the Jews, transfer their religion and traditions to a new land, yet at the same time manage to reach compromises in order to integrate.

4. The Mennonites

4. 1. From Europe to Canada

The Mennonites are a religious-cultural minority formed in the 16th century when they broke away from the Roman Catholic Church during the Protestant Reformation. At this time they were known as Anabaptists, their chief argument being that mature adults and not infants should be baptized as only the former can make this choice voluntarily. The Anabaptist movement spread throughout Europe, eventually becoming the above-mentioned Mennonite minority. It is only after reading Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many* side by side with English-language sources charting the history of settling Canada that the fascinating background to the Mennonite community can be revealed.

Due to a constantly repeating pattern of persecution, the Mennonites were constantly forced from wherever they had found refuge. Originating in the northern German states and the Netherlands under the leadership of Menno Simons, they subsequently spread to Switzerland, Poland, Russia and North America – those in North America being of course the ones the most relevant to this work. The Mennonites' religious beliefs – one of the constantly recurring themes in Wiebe's novel – played a key role in defining where that minority chose to settle in the past. One of the most controversial – and maybe even fatal – elements of the Mennonite faith has been their insistence on observing a Pacifist approach to armed conflict. In the late 1770s, this belief led the so-called "Swiss Mennonites", who had settled in Pennsylvania – in today's USA – to move north to Canada. There were several reasons for this move: the availability of cheap farming land, but chiefly the prospect of living under British rule. The latter simply because the Mennonites, after the U.S. War for Independence, were viewed with suspicion due to their pacifism. The Mennonites in Wiebe's novel originated from Russia much later – almost a century in fact. From the early 1870s, Russian Mennonites migrated to the Manitoba region of Canada. Once again, their Pacifist beliefs had come under threat as new regulations in Russia meant that the Mennonites' exemption from military service was coming under attack. By the 1890s, thanks primarily to promises of exemption from military service, Russian Mennonites were settling the Saskatchewan region of Canada mentioned in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Russian Mennonites faced even greater dangers concerning not just their religion but indeed their entire way of

life, farming practices and community. This resulted in the second wave of emigration to Canada, with a third wave following in the post World War II period. The *Mennonite Historical Society of Canada website* (MHSC) accentuates this fact in its chapter on Russian Mennonites in stating that:

> As a result of these mass movements, Russian Mennonites prove an important part of Canadian history, and especially that of Western Canada. In fact, Winnipeg, Manitoba continues to have one of the largest urban populations of people of Mennonite background in the world, as well as over 50 active Mennonite congregations! (MHSC, www.mhsc.ca)

4. 2. Mennonites and Language

Language is another crucial aspect of the Mennonite community and consequently a theme explored by Wiebe in his novel. Thanks to the Mennonite community's Germanic origin their mother-tongue was German. Wiebe deals with this theme in detail for good reason as the German language could be seen as a comforting common element for a community that moved from place to place whilst striving to maintain an element of stability at the same time. The *Mennonite Historical Society of Canada* website, which relates the complex story of the Mennonite language, adds that language was not just a stabilizing element but also actually an element separating the Mennonites from other communities. Understandably, there was tension not just between young and old members of the communities, but also between earlier and later Mennonite immigrants. The language-picture becomes even more complicated with the Mennonite language when we examine the various Canadian Mennonite groups. The Swiss Mennonites brought to Canada a unique version of the Palitinate German dialect – so-called Pennsylvania Dutch. On the other hand, the Russian Mennonites used either formal German or a dialect known as Plautdietsch or "low" German. At this stage it is important to mention German-language literature in Canada as it was still being produced by Mennonite authors during World War II. Arnold Dyck for example was the German-language equivalent of the Canadian-English author W. H. Jarvis. Dyck's *Koop enn Bua Reise (Koop and Bua Travelling)* takes a light-hearted view of the simple Mennonite farmer attempting to come to grips with the wide world. But there is also a more serious view to his writing in his short stories in Low German. In these stories Dyck expresses concern regarding Mennonite farming methods, communal life

and language. According to the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), Dyck was:

> [A] major writer by any standard, and his *Collected Works* were published in four volumes by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1985ff. His inimitable comic characters "Koop" and "Bua," the naive Manitoba "bush" farmers who embark on travels in three superb novels, can stand comparison with the great comic archetypes of world literature. (GAMEO, www.gameo.org)

GAMEO however, continues ruefully that: "Had Arnold Dyck written as well in English as he did in *Plautdietsch* he would undoubtedly be ranked among Canada's finest humorists." This statement would seem to lend an element of truth to the assertion, made earlier in this work, concerning the fact that Canadian literature in any other language than English was simply not attractive enough, either for the casual reader or for the literary critic. Subsequently, the English reader seeking an insight into the lives of Canadian immigrant minorities is reliant almost entirely on writers writing of such issues from a more retrospective point of view and of course, writing in English. In this respect Rudy Wiebe was much more fortunate than Dyck, as he wrote in English, in spite of the fact that, paradoxically, his native tongue was actually the Plautdietsch that Dyck wrote in. This then could be possibly considered to be the breaking point where the English-language reader is finally introduced to that mysterious world of the foreign immigrant in Canada.

5. Traditional Values in Peace Shall Destroy Many

5. 1. Mennonites and Pacifism

It could of course be argued that Ralph Connor had already introduced the English reader to the immigrant environment in his novel *The Foreigner, A Tale of Saskatchewan* many years previous to Wiebe's novel. There are though several marked differences in the way in which the immigrant environment has been approached in these respective books. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this paper, Connor's portrayal of the mass of immigrants is, to say the least, pessimistic. This is though, in a way, quite logical as Connor was writing from an Anglo-Canadian viewpoint. In essence Connor was an outsider writing about a social group of whom he does not seem to know much at all. Anything different was bound to be regarded with suspicion and so subsequently demonized.

Bearing in mind that Connor's novel was written in 1909 – over a hundred years after the "Swiss" Mennonites had arrived from Pennsylvania, and over thirty years since the Russian Mennonites had arrived from Russia – the picture he paints of that people is one still full of mystery and even envy. The mysterious foreigner in Connors's novel, on viewing a settlement from the train, asks his fellow-traveller about a group of structures outside on the plain. He is told that it is a Mennonite village – "Dutch or Russian or something," (17) his neighbour tells him. The latter continues:

> "They are honest, though," continued his neighbour judicially; "we sell them implements."
> "Ah, implements?" enquired the stranger.
> "Yes, ploughs, drills, binders, you know."
> "Ah, so, implements," said the stranger, evidently making a mental note of the word. "And they pay you?"
> "Yes, they are good pay, mighty good pay. They are good settlers, too."
> "Not good for soldiers, eh?" laughed the stranger.
> "Soldiers? No, I guess not. But we don't want soldiers."
> (Connor, 17)

Here though, is another breaking point in portraying the immigrant – specifically the Mennonite immigrant. At this stage in Connor's novel, the Mennonite

was portrayed as a rather quaint addition to the Canadian background: a "foreign" group but one with an almost Puritan-like religion.

Not quite a century later, Wiebe's message seems be the exact opposite: The Mennonite religion is beginning to be a liability. In the above excerpt from Connor's work there is a definite reference to one of the root values of the Mennonite religion – Pacifism. This is of course an extremely important aspect of Mennonite life, and one that defined that minority's history of migration. As witnessed above, allusions to Pacifism can be found in Canadian literature they are however of a rather fleeting, superficial nature. In fact it was not until 1987 that thanks to Thomas S. Socknat, and his work, *Witness against War: Pacifism in Canada*, an in-depth study of this issue was undertaken. The literary critic J. L. Granatstein, in his review of Socknat's work, writes for *The American Historical Review*, that:

> The small pacifist movement in Canada before World War I was concentrated in the churches and to some extent in the labour movement. But when Canada went to war in August 1914 pacifism instantly became a German plot, and conscientious objectors were seen as "slackers." Canada was then still a political and intellectual part of the empire, more fervid in its and there was little tolerance for those in English Canada who refused to volunteer to fight, or even worse, who urged men to resist military service. (Granatstein, www.jstor.org)

In his study Socknat dubs the Mennonite approach to pacifism as "separational" pacifism, and the liberal pacifism of the Quakers and Protestant radicals as "integrational" pacifism. He continues, "[T]he sectarian pacifists remained the constant factor in the survival of the pacifist idea in Canada, particularly in times of war, and their communal societies served as models for Canadians seeking new methods of social organization" (Granatstein, 8) The manner in which conscientious objectors – and consequently Mennonites – were viewed during World War I and between both World Wars differed markedly therefore from the relatively relaxed view of them in the late 19th century. This subsequently affected immigrant policy aversely until well into the 20th century. The pattern was much the same for other "suspect" migrant groups as will be seen when some aspects of Jewish literature in English are investigated later on in this paper.

Regarding Pacifism in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, the author adopts an almost hopeless tone. The reader senses from the very introduction of the question of pacifism that there will be compromises. The two entities are at loggerheads – the more liberal adopted country vying with the strict unbending rules of the orthodox faith

concerning pacifist views. The uncertainty for the future is evident when Wiens' son, Thom, is arguing with a local Mennonite girl, Annamarie, on the question of whether Mennonites should take part in the killing of human beings, albeit on the side of the allies, during the second-world-war. What emerges from this conversation is a "Catch 22" situation, where Annamarie, evidently a more liberal Mennonite, argues:

> "In Germany no one can say, "I refuse to join the Army." They either join or they are shot, which ends their earthly usefulness as witnesses to Christianity. If Allied soldiers did not stop the German advance, we could not live to hold our belief in Canada because Hitler would soon control us too. As the Russians are doing to the Mennonites that still remain there." (Wiebe, 46)

This question of Pacifism in Wiebe's novel provides the reader with a hitherto unknown aspect of Canada's past. The dialogues concerning the complex issues of this topic are almost heart rendering. The young teacher in Peace Shall Destroy Many, Joseph, contests many of the Mennonite assertions concerning farming, religion and language. Annamarie could be seen as symbolizing momentous changes in the Mennonite community as she seems to be spreading Joseph's views on Pacifism.

5. 2. Language and Religion

In reading Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Man,* the reader becomes conscious of the complex issues, which faced immigrant communities in a developing Canada. Wiebe portrays a fiercely pacifist community, which after decades of secluded life in Canada's vast emptiness suddenly faces uncertainty and change triggered by the second-world-war. Disputes concerning feelings of loyalty to the new country, the onset of modern technology and dogmatism of faith all arise. It is not only compelling reading but also a decisive argument in proving the important role Canadian literature plays in portraying the past of that fascinating country.

Today many tend to view literature dealing with the past as a rather quaint affair with no connection to the present. In fact quite the opposite is true. Hope and despair of a people bent on building a new life in a strange and sometimes hostile country are recurring themes throughout history. Rudy Wiebe in writing about hope in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* introduces an element of despair almost from the very beginning of his narration. Most accounts of immigrant life in settling new lands – especially in North America – tend to focus on visions of a bright new future. David

Wiens, one of the main protagonists in the novel, thinks back a "mere" twenty-seven years to the time when the Mennonites arrived in Canada from Russia. In one short moment he seems to dismiss the whole process of the Mennonite immigration to Canada, at best, as the lesser of two evils. For Wiens, immigration and the Canadian bush had:

> [D]isrupted the whole order of things, for though one could succeed with some Russian Mennonite farming methods, most past standards seemed barely authorative. Farming villages were impossible, married children had to settle far and farther from their parents, the family was splintered, the English language intruded itself. (Wiebe, 21)

Contrary to the general perception, immigration to Canada had according to Wiens, been only provided a temporary respite. The Mennonites were originally a tight-knit community, with a strict code of conduct – much as in any society. With the move to Canada this code of conduct was starting to break up. For Wiens, behaviour was clear – right was right and wrong was wrong. In Canada:

> The people, scattered in the Canadian bush lived, according to accepted Mennonite standards, such nonchalantly sinful lives that when Wiens was among them, even on his infrequent visits to Calder, he felt as if the foundation of all morality was sliced from beneath him. (Wiebe, 21)

Strong words, but for a man clinging to such an orthodox faith – as indeed the Mennonite faith at that time was – a strictly organized way of life was under attack. This attack was in effect instigated by the host country itself – more specifically, by that country's society. The move to Canada was therefore (for some Mennonites at least) not that rather clichéd impression of settlers enthusiastically integrating into a new land on the backdrop of a setting sun.

It would probably be fair to say that the French language is generally seen, along with English, as an integral part of Canada's heritage. However, in delving into literature dealing with the Mennonite minority the reader discovering Canadian literature may be surprised to find how pivotal a role the German language played in the life of that community right up into the early 1900s. Language itself was a confusing issue for the Mennonites in their new land. As mentioned in the chapter dealing with singular Mennonite issues, Low German was spoken in everyday, mundane conversation; High German was used for religious matters and out of politeness; English on the other hand was spoken by young members of the Mennonite community among themselves: "Thought and tongue slipped unhesitantly from one

language to the other" (20). Another wedge therefore – the English language – was causing yet another crack in the stoic and seemingly stable foundations of the Mennonite faith. Indeed, the first part of the novel is set in the spring of 1944, and within the first few pages the reader is witness to the incongruous situation where two brothers, the older Thom, and the much younger child Hal, are having a conversation. Thom is trying to explain to an uncomprehending Hal the intricacies of pacifism, "working the religious idea, among Mennonites always expressed in High German, into the unaccustomed suit of workday English."(16)

This is in effect probably the chief integrating factor for the Mennonite community. This seems to have been the moment in time when the community's protective battlements of language, after years of resisting the attacks of outside influences had started to develop devastating cracks.

One of the most dramatic passages in Wiebe's work can be found in chapter four, which deals with the language and religion issue and is presented in an almost thriller-like manner. So much so in fact, that the reader does not actually know what exactly preceded the event described here. The core theme of the passage is an extraordinary church meeting, the reasons for which are not entirely clear at first. Presumably in order to clarify things for the reader, Wiebe uses an interesting mixture of didactic narrative, retrospect, primitive metaphors and mystique. At the above mentioned church meeting Thom, who could probably be described as the "doubting Thomas" of the novel, reminisces on the meaning of the church in the Mennonite community. "To him it [the church] was something quite beyond a building or a focal point of communal activities or a group of people with similar interests. The church stood, darkly remembered, where his faintest memories merged into the void of early childhood." (50) Thomas's memories go back to his early childhood and his encounter with the local blacksmith Aaron Marten. Aaron is telling Thom about the construction of the new church – a solid church, which should last indefinitely. Aaron tells Thom:

> "We're building a church now," words clipped between a series of hammer blows, "a solid church. It'll stand when you, small one, are as old as I; when your children are as old as I." He paused in his cutting and pointed to several iron rods half-hidden in the dead leaves of the tree-copse behind them, "See those rods there? They cost plenty – money none of us has. They came all the way from Hainy." He began his thunderous assault again. "But we need them for the church; to hold the walls solid and upright. Log churches built right hold out long. Ours'll

> last because it[']s built on the Rock," and broad sweat furrows pushed through the grime on the blacksmith's face. (51)

Such symbols as the rods and the Rock are simple but recognisable allusions towards certain aspects of religious life. In mentioning the rods Wiebe seems to be comparing them to the Mennonites' religious rules bonding the church members together, and warning of the impending tough times ahead. In spite of Aaron's insistence on the lasting properties of the new church, it seems that the reader is being warned of trouble to come. After Pastor Lepp, who reads from his sermon in the High German used in such cases, speaks about the need for the community to be at peace among themselves, even Thom himself can sense something is not quite right. He "could hardly doubt what the sudden reason for the church meeting might be, but the serene brotherliness about him was reassuring. Their church did not have quarrels: the problem would be solved and the matter concluded." (52) The reader can almost feel the "comfort blanket" approach in which Thom views any impending problem in the community. This essence of solidity and infinity is further strengthened in the passage describing one of the chief items on the agenda – the election of delegates to the Canadian Conference. The Canadian Conference is a community of Mennonite Brethren Churches across Canada, which is, still today according to their website www.mbconf.ca, "united by Jesus Christ through our evangelical Anabaptist beliefs and values and by our mission to grow healthy churches, helping them reach their worlds." For Thom, we read:

> [T]he Conference was a sort of omnipotent power where the Mennonites of Canada convened for doctrinal and general policy decision. Though its fifteen thousand members were almost lost across a sweep of five provinces, to him, who could not recall seeing over one hundred people at one time, their united belief was solidarity itself. (53)

From the above extract the reader is witness to the way in which Wiebe has underlined the mindset of the Mennonite community at that time in Canadian history i.e. at the beginning of World War II. Things, we sense, are about to change. The author builds up the tension from this crucial point in the passage; questions are being asked about a young people's church meeting at a local settlement Poplar Lake. There is a definite feeling of political intricacy in the air as Wiebe relates how Thom, realising that the moment of truth has come, contemplates who could have possibly lodged a complaint.

Franz, the leader of the church youth committee, is being queried as to the proceedings of the young people's meeting, and Thom is casting his mind back to what actually took place. Wiebe paints a picture of pastoral bliss:

> Scalding coffee in enamelled cups; jam sandwiches eaten squatting; high laughter of the girls under half-hushed pines; still-hot sand by the lap of the lake with the sun blazing down to the tree-line; songs sung to the lost echo of the wilderness: not having books […] the moving harmony of young voices in the choir on Saturday evening. (Wiebe, 54)

But the peace and calm is broken by Pastor Lepp's question as to what language the evening program was carried out in. Franz answers that the program was in English because Brother Dueck – Joseph the schoolteacher – "pointed out that there were some people there from both districts who were not Mennonites and could not understand German. Also, we noticed some Indians within hearing distance, and so he suggested we speak in English." (55) This last comment concerning the Indians deserves the reader's attention as Wiebe also seems to be also exploring issues of racial intolerance, which are dealt with elsewhere in this thesis. The real bombshell however comes when Joseph raises his voice from the back of the church to query this apparent preoccupation with language. "Could I ask why it is so important that the church know I spoke in English?" Joseph wonders. This is obviously the pivotal point on which the whole novel is based – it is almost as though the author is trying to emphasise that this almost amounts to heresy, and that from now on the community, and consequently the reader too, must be prepared for dissent and conflict within a social group hitherto unused to such phenomena.

Already at this stage in the novel it is clear that not only was Wiebe one of the first Mennonite authors writing in English, but he was also the first writer to in effect "lift the lid off" the running of the Mennonite community. He was in fact severely criticized for his portrayal of the said minority – most critics accusing him of portraying his own people in a pessimistic manner. Both of these factors – language and self-criticism – come together towards the close of chapter four where Joseph is asked to summarise his sermon given at the youth meeting. The reason for this being that most of the church elders do not speak English, a fact that we learn from Thom's musings as he sits listening to the proceedings. Wiebe portrays this fact almost as if it were a sudden revelation for Thom, as if it were the key to understanding a new, unknown and maybe even frightening stage in that young man's life. Joseph argues:

> [H]ow are we today expressing this Love [whereby the Mennonites back their faith with their lives] in the comfort of Canada? We can in no way assert our rights against our neighbours by any means, violent or otherwise, yet what if our neighbours molest our country? Can a country then continue to exist, a majority of its people being non-participants in war? […] Given a war situation, we Mennonites can practise our belief in Canada only because other Canadians are kind enough to fight for our right to our belief. The Godless man then dies for the belief of the Christian! […] But we as a church have gone on in the traditional ways of reacting to war, not considering that the world has changed, even since World War One. (Wiebe, 60)

At this stage in his monologue, Joseph is interrupted by the outraged Deacon. Here Wiebe uses almost biblical metaphors – the Deacon's "steel eyes flaming" and "the sound and the look a bolt blast to everyone." (60) The climax of the scene is likewise treated by Wiebe in a similarly dramatic fashion with the use of the oxymoron "The silence was deafening," (60) to describe the reaction of the congregation. The author's use of symbolism is particular strong, almost to the point of being overdone, when describing the reaction of a moth that Thom notices circling the glowing mantles in the church. Thom notes that the moth was, "fiercely attracted by the light and as fiercely repelled the heat." (60) Thom's reactions to the dramatic events seem to be reflected in this symbolic event, where on one hand he seems to sympathise with Joseph, but on the other hand he worries about the impending consequences.

6. War and Change in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*

6. 1. Conscientious Objection

A sense of insecurity as to what is to come seems to be one of the key aspects to this novel. It is of course a work of fiction and so one must be wary of drawing any direct parallels between what happens in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and what actually happened in real life. It is, however, logical to assume that Wiebe is basing his story on the way in which the Mennonite community evolved during World War II. This sudden need to make crucial compromises and changes in order to survive in a rapidly changing wartime world is witnessed by historians dealing with matters concerning the Mennonites. In *Challenge to Mars: essays on pacifism from 1918 to 1945,* by Peter Brock and Thomas Paul Socknat, Socknat describes the tensions present in Canada at the time of World War II. In his essay *Conscientious Objection in Canada* Socknat writes how the united pacifist front sent a delegation to Ottawa in September 1940, in which it sought official recognition of all COs – conscientious objectors – along with some form of alternative service. "By November," Socknat relates, "the same message was reiterated by a joint delegation representing both the Conference of Historic Peace Churches and Western Mennonites, mainly Russländers, now represented by the Mennonite Central Relief Committee." (260) A wider Canadian society had however a largely differing opinion, as Socknat continues:

> In the meantime, government officials were facing increasing public resentment, especially in the west, over pacifist exemptions. George McDonald, a former Manitoba Liberal MP, claimed that Manitobans were angered and bitter that Mennonites were escaping military training while their young men took up arms. "While our sons are fighting," he complained, "these men will be building up good homes. It certainly isn't fair." Such sentiments were taken very seriously by the government. (Wiebe, 260)

Eventually, conscientious objectors of all denominations were organised into Alternative Service Work (ASW) camps. However, according to Socknat, even among the COs there were differences of opinion as to what type of work their religion permitted them to do. Socknat writes, lending certain credence to Wiebe's work that:

> Certainly, the COs in the camps were not in agreement on the nature of alternative service. Their opinions ran the gamut from Jehovah's Witnesses, still resistant to the idea of any type of military service,

> through a large number of men, mostly Mennonites who were generally satisfied with their duties, to those increasingly demanding more worthwhile work. (Wiebe, 263)

Wiebe alludes to the above issue in his novel when the school teacher, Joseph, decides to go to one of the more acceptable (for the Mennonites) work camps where he will be trained with other COs for work on the battlefield as medical corps. This naturally confuses Thom even further who feels his world has come crashing down and cannot understand Joseph who, "staggered alone where guide-posts bearing the same legend pointed over horizonless dunes in opposing directions." (63) Joseph seems to be Wiebes mouthpiece in showing how the Mennonite community fits – or more precisely does not fit – into the concept of Canada as a whole. The reader senses Joseph's helplessness whilst arguing with Thom about the community and the real world. Just as we read of the divisions between members of the Mennonite community in the above extract from Socknat's essay, Wiebe also weaves a more complicated picture of reality, reminding the reader, through Joseph, of deeper issues influencing Mennonite opinion such as farming methods and the use of machinery. Joseph pleads with Thom:

> "If you could get out to see for yourself. At least you use modern machinery and wear ordinary clothes: you haven't fallen into the pitfalls of some Mennonites who almost equate Christianity with a certain cut and colour of clothes, […] There are Mennonites in the south – too many – who live in settlements as you people do here, but others are getting away from this "physical separation" idea." (Wiebe, 69)

Already in 1939 the Mennonites had, as T. D. Regehr points out in *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: a people transformed*:

> [S]urvived the difficulties of the 1920s and 1930s, but powerful influences already at work would end that separation and transform them. They were at a turning point, though many regarded it more as a fork in the road. One path led to accommodation and integration with the outside world, loss of faith and ultimately eternal punishment. The other, much more difficult path, required renewed commitment to a separatist strategy. (Regehr, 31)

6. 2. Intolerance

T. D. Regehr also introduces the issue of intolerance when he writes about the Mennonite Evangelists who propose a return to an old-fashioned gospel message. Regehr writes that, "Juxtaposed against those traditional virtues were sharp denunciations not only of the evils of the cities and of non-agricultural industrial

endeavours but also of modernists, liberals, and humanists who preached a social gospel that sought to reform social conditions." He continues that, "Many of the evangelists were highly intolerant of anyone whose religious ideas differed from their own" (20)

Wiebe also deals with the theme of intolerance in his novel, although not of course in such a clinically scientific fashion. At this point in his novel Wiebe starts to introduce less savoury aspects of the Mennonite church elders, specifically of Block the Deacon. As has been mentioned before, this novel is of a didactic nature, and it is quite evident how Wiebe has organised the structure of the novel almost as if laying out a legal defence. He uses the tool of retrospect in order to explain Block's behaviour within the Mennonite community in Canada. Hermann Paetkau, a young farmer living alone on a farm remote from the rest of the community, is the starting point for Wiebe's exploration into the theme of religious intolerance. The author weaves a complex tale in which he constantly reverts to the past almost as if he is solving a mystery in a detective story. Once again, it is Thom who is subjected to another unsettling insight into his own community. Whilst on a chance visit to Hermann's farm, Thom discovers that Hermann is living with a "breed" woman – a half-Indian woman. In anticipation to the actual discovery, Wiebe builds up the tension in setting the scene for this – in Mennonite terms – startling event:

> Thom could still see Hermann's face that frozen day in February when he had ridden into the bachelor's yard to warm himself after the futile hunting of wolves […] Hermann, having heard the dog bark and the crack of frozen saddle leather, tumbled from his snow-heaped cabin, pulling on his sheep-skin parka, face open with welcome. […] the board door that Hermann drew open and there, putting a stick of wood into the top of the stove as she turned to smile at him entering, had been Madeleine Moosomin. (Wiebe, 104)

The reader learns that Thom has been living with this knowledge for a whole seven months without imparting it to anyone, in spite of the fact that both men had wanted it to be known what Hermann had done. Wiebe writes that, "[N]either of them expected it to be a long seven months before another Mennonite found out. All the breeds knew, for Hermann was their friend." (104) On one hand, Wiebe describes the couple's co-existence favourably from the point of view of a remote watcher: "For him [Hermann] to have another person in the house, one who did not leave hurriedly but peeped into his neat cupboards and fingered the cotton window-curtains […] must suddenly have

seemed a thrust into reality." (107) On the other hand, Wiebe describes Thom's conflicting emotions:

> Thom had only felt instantaneous revulsion at the man's action. Looking at Madeleine, he could not recall having seen a more noble woman, yet his conscience insisted. Hermann was a member of Wapiti Mennonite Church; church members did not live alone with and then marry any half-breed woman that rode into their yards. […] Hermann said, noting his [Thom's] face darken, "We drove to Hainy when the storm let up and the J.P. married us. You're the only Mennonite in Wapiti who knows." […] To call himself a Christian and be married outside the church. His [Thom's] thinking had bogged, blind to its own illogic. Even now, his mind rebelled, blindly. (Wiebe,108)

All the above contemplation on Thom's side takes place parallel to a radio broadcast reporting the liberation of Paris. This is another literary device favoured by Wiebe very often in the novel. Here we sense Thom's frustration at listening to enthusiastic reports of freedom whilst he himself not being free to unburden himself of his knowledge of Hermann's behaviour. Again the symbolism here is very strong: In Europe the situation is finally reaching a decisive point, whereas back home in the Mennonite community the situation has become much more complicated.

The next piece of Wiebe's intricate jig-saw puzzle concerns a complex dialogue between Thom and his parents where several more dark secrets surrounding the community leader Block are uncovered. From this conversation the reader learns that Hermann Paetkau wanted to marry Block's daughter, Elizabeth, and approached Block to ask for his permission to do so. Block however refuses to give his permission. In order to understand Block's reaction, Wiebe – in one of his trademark flashbacks – takes the reader back to the old country – Russia – where Block knew something of Hermann's background. Hermann, it seems, is an illegitimate child and has been therefore doomed ever since arriving in the community. As mentioned above, Hermann eventually marries the half-breed Madeleine. In this dialogue it seems that Wiebe is trying to reproduce a whole range of Mennonite opinions within one small family each symbolising a different approach to the issues of the day. Wiens is presented as the quintessential Mennonite believer, accepting the authority of the church without question. Mrs Wiens, a more realistically thinking person, is torn between loyalty to her husband and a necessity to relate the facts in as balanced a way as possible. Margaret, Thom's sister, is portrayed as a rebellious young lady, with strong opinions, and

unusually emancipated – the reader senses – for that period in Canadian history. Caught up among these emotions and revelations is Thom himself, trying to make sense of a world that is slowly being stripped of its protective layers and uncovering an ugly interior in the process. On hearing of how Hermann was basically hounded out of the Mennonite community for the mere crime of being illegitimate, Thom asks, unbelievingly, "Did things like that happen in Russia?" (115) His mother answers that it did in fact happen sometimes.

> "Well it didn't happen very often," Pa was convinced. "Not like around here – Unger boys tramping off to war – Hermann having to be expelled from the church for living with a breed woman – that sort of thing."
> "Oh Pa, he's married to her, and she's a Christian – "
> "So he says. Why doesn't he ever bring her to church? Hasn't been in church himself nearly all summer. Why didn't she come then tonight and tell us herself?"
> "'Cause she can't speak a word of German. What should she do there? – sit and be gawked at? […]
> Mrs Wiens broke in. "Stop it! It's far too late – we should be in bed." (115)

Wiebe, seems to be presenting the reader with all the arguments neatly laid out, almost as if he is saying, "So here, dear reader, are all the facts. It is now up to you to draw the conclusions yourself." In some respects the novel at this stage becomes almost too didactic, almost too overpowering. The complex chain of events seems to be somehow artificial – possibly a result of the author attempting to induce too many events relating to history into too short a time. In some aspects it is as if an omniscient teacher – Wiebe – is addressing a class of students and expecting to hear the correct answers to a whole range of issues. The problem seems to be – and this becomes more evident towards the end of the novel – that not even Wiebe himself is capable of answering the issues raised here.

7. Mennonites and Society in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*

7. 1. Orthodox and Unorthodox Women's Roles

One of the possible reasons for this inability for Wiebe's characters to come up with any suitable solutions to the above-mentioned issues could be found in the hierarchical social system of the Mennonite community. Wiebe alludes to this indirectly in the passage concerning Hermann Paetkau and his half-breed wife. Proof of this can also be found in T. D. Regehr's *Mennonites in Canada.* In describing everyday life here the author explains:

> Gender roles were clearly defined and carefully maintained. The male head of the family had final responsibility and authority for all aspects of family life. On occasion that facilitated arbitrary and even abusive behaviour, but overriding concerns for the success and welfare of the family farm or small-town business limited exploitative behaviour. The traditional farm family in 1939 was patriarchal, but the important place of women in the farm economy gave them a greater influence than was the case in many non-farm urban families. (Regehr, 28)

At this stage Wiebe introduces a new character to the novel – Razia Tantamont, the new school teacher drafted in to replace Joseph, who is training at an ASW camp. There is a definite sense of change of mood at this point in the narrative: in fact there is a sense of impending doom. As a symbol of this marked change Wiebe has decided to choose a woman, and there are several interesting aspects of this character which deserve contemplation. This first is the name Wiebe has chosen – Razia. In the sea of Germanic-sounding names in the novel so far, the name Razia strikes discord. Wiebe could be merely using this sound-change as a tool for changing the tone of the novel as this is obviously a significant moment in the train of events. However, not only is the name Razia of Arabian origin but it is also the name of the first Muslim ruler of South Asia, Razia Sultana. Wiebe approaches the whole setting of the scene depicting Razia and her impending role in the narrative rather transparently and in a rather heavy-handed manner. Apparently some sort of confrontation concerning the Mennonite community is to come and Wiebe, it seems, cannot assign the role of the perpetrator for this confrontation to one of his own community. Wiebe, for all his criticism of Mennonite hierarchy is obviously still extremely wary of having a Mennonite take a central part in what is to come. There is a perceptible flavour of religious prejudice here – an allusion to non-Christian forces being responsible for a Christian community's

downfall. That the school teacher Razia will be lonely here, and therefore be a dangerous element, is obvious:

> Slightly panicked, she [Razia] turned on her pointed shoes and, leaning against the door-frame, flicked her eyes over the vacant school with its home-made desks, dinted gas-barrel heater, stove pipes sagging from wires, blistered blackboards, library of coverless books tilted against the wall. These poor bush-buried kids: there was plenty to teach them about the world. Reading and the radio would conquer her loneliness. She pirouetted at the thought, proud of her grace, and walked carefully down the steps towards the teacherage. (Wiebe,120)

But a more interesting aspect of the description of Razia in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* is the sudden emergence of erotic symbolism. Razia consequently critically assesses all the young men who come to visit her, and in all these situations described by Wiebe there is some reference to female sexuality – an aspect hitherto missing in the novel. When Thom goes to Razia requesting help with his religious studies, the scene is anything but religious:

> [S]he could have laughed with joy. He had the gentility of great strength. Her glance flew about the room: she tossed The Sun Also Rises behind a pile of texts on the shelf above the table. In the tiny bedroom she kicked off her slippers, stepped into the pumps which were the marvel of the girls in school, dabbed away a trace of lipstick, whisked the brush down the curve of her hair and paused, the kitchen light on the mirror wrapping her figure warmly in the darkness of the bedroom. As she fumbled for the door she called, "Come in, Thom," and then from the bedroom she saw the cigarette box on the table beside her lamp. Tapping over, she dropped the box and ashtray behind the texts with Hemingway. She turned as he entered. (Wiebe, 169)

Continuing with the theme of women in the Mennonite community Wiebe contrasts the portrayal of the above-mentioned Razia with the fate of women in his narrative. A series of exposés follow: the first concerning an earlier discussion Thom had with Pastor Lepp. In this dialogue Thom voices his concerns, partly influenced by Joseph's ideas, with the role of the German language in forming a protective barrier between the outside world and the Mennonite community. Pastor Lepp argues that, "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. That's the reason Deacon Block was so insistent at our church meeting." (88) Thom's reaction is actually his first deeper questioning of the otherwise respected Deacon, who is portrayed as an almost God-like person:

> "Yes," the mention of the Deacon diverted Thom's thoughts from his original intention, "but he insists on other things too. We are never to do anything that has not been done before, in the church; yet for his farm he buys a tractor, and everyone agrees it's very fine –" The other sobered. "The Deacon has done many great things for us here in Wapiti – never forget that, Thom. He started us all when we had nothing. (Wiebe, 88)

But within the passage expanding the theme of the role of women in Mennonite society Thom discovers further unsettling flaws in Block's character. Apart from his pre-occupation with work, Block seems to have scant regard for his wife and children – especially for his daughter Elizabeth whom Wiebe mentions earlier in connection with Hermann Paetkau's offer of marriage to her. The thirty-three-year old Elizabeth has been toiling ceaselessly on the Block farm, doing a grown man's work regardless of her gender. The number thirty-three could also be another of Wiebe's religious symbolisms – the allusions to Christ being rather obvious here. Thom, being friendly with Block's son Pete, is helping the Blocks with the harvest, and at the same time he muses on the Deacon's ways of doing things:

> They [Thom and Pete] forked steadily. Thom thought, there should be more to living than than work, and more work. Friendship perhaps? He could as well forget about trying to regain that deep serenity he and Pete had known, past now as an age, before Joseph had come and gone. Pete, plodding in his father's ways never changed. But Pete's activities somehow lacked the edge of brilliance that, despite growing conviction, attracted Thom to the Deacon. When he was near Pete, Thom found it increasingly easier to discover flaws in the Deacon's methods. […] Work. What had work given Elizabeth, for example? A pain in her stomach? (139)

7. 2. Ignorance, Yearning and Death

Elizabeth has been working in the fields and something is obviously physically troubling her but nobody can get out of her what the problem is. What follows is probably one of the strongest scenes in the novel. It is as if Wiebe is trying to point out the inherent weakness of the male members of the Mennonite community. Most of the males seem to be too pre-occupied with issues of work or with religious formalities to find time to question the way their community is run:

> As the afternoon ebbed away, Elizabeth came from the house with the cardboard box of lunch. […] As he picked the cookie from the tin in the box, her hand reached out almost as if she was reaching for his. Then it

> paused, and she whispered, as if there had been anyone to hear in the threshing, "Thom – go away from here!" "Wha-a –" His hand could not rise with the cookie. He was nonplussed, as if an elderly woman had kissed him. She did not notice his confusion but rushed on: "Go away from here – Wapiti – for a few years. You're thinking right – to teach those children from the Bible – Pete told me you want to take correspondence school again, like last winter with Joseph […] "You're brother David couldn't work here – Joseph had to go – Pastor Lepp – Herm – Aaron Martens – look what they are! A church is supposed to be a brotherhood – all equal – that gets its direction from scripture – not rules!" […] "God in heaven! Can't you see what's happened to me?" The passion of her voice was as a surge to heave him from Wapiti. Her face was old. (Wiebe, 141)

The feminist view of the Mennonite community is something that seems to have been rarely expressed even in modern times. Still well into the twentieth century only tentative attempts were being made by women to study the role of women in Mennonite society. One common thing that most women exploring the female aspect of these societies seem to have agreed upon is the fact that women were assigned a subservient role. Lydia Marlene Harder, in her introduction to *Obedience, Suspicion and the Gospel of Mark: A Mennonite-feminist Exploration of Biblical Authority*, writes:

> I have often felt angered by a practice of biblical interpretation in Mennonite churches that was oppressive and stifling to many women in the congregations. Biblical interpretations by men condoned and encouraged a marginal role for women in Mennonite church institutions as well as in society. Despite strong affirmations of the church as a hermeneutic community, the pattern of communication and social interaction often did not encourage an active participation by women in the theological process of determining the meaning of biblical texts for the community. I therefore needed the encouragement of feminist theology to begin a critical re-examination of authority as construed by my own religious heritage. (Harder,1)

Another female writer, Gloria Neufeld Redekop, writes with a certain sense of exasperation of the rather lukewarm way in which some of her colleagues approached this issue. In *The Work of Their Hands: Mennonite Women's Societies in Canada* Redekop acknowledges the fact that among Mennonite women there was an awareness of feminist issues. These issues though, she points out, were of a complex character. Redekop notes that:

> Women's desire for personal development and intellectual growth led to an increase in the number of Mennonite women returning to school to pursue further studies. Katie Funk Wiebe [a Mennonite Brethren writer and teacher at Tabor College, Kansas, U.S.A.] noted that the church was

> reluctant to condone this change because of its fear that women would neglect the home. (Redekop, 78)

Redekop is writing in the late 1990s but she is looking back at the 1960s, at about the same time as Rudy Wiebe wrote Peace Shall Destroy Many. It could be said therefore, that Wiebe was maybe trying to draw attention to the plight of Mennonite women within their community. His attempts however could be seen as rather half-hearted either because, as has been mentioned earlier in this paper, he was for all his criticism of the Mennonite hierarchy, still a little wary of overdoing things, or it was something he considered should be addressed by Mennonite women themselves. It was however proving to be a tough topic to broach as Redekop remarks in *The Work of Their Hands*:

> Some Mennonite women were at least aware of the issues of the women's movement as indicated in a book review of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* which appeared in *The Canadian Mennonite* in 1966. The writer admitted that suffragettes had gained certain privileges for women, even though, according to her, their methods and goals were not always right. She agreed with Friedan that women were living below their capabilities and queried whether the Mennonite church had been guilty of asking too little of Mennonite women: "Too many women in our churches have yielded to an image which is less than biblical[…]" (Redekop, 78)

In Wiebe's novel Elizabeth continues to symbolise the plight of the Mennonite woman as the sense of tragedy increases. Elizabeth suddenly collapses, and subsequently dies, and in the ensuing scenes her parents discover that she was in fact pregnant – a fact hitherto unbeknown to them and everyone around her. Elizabeth's father, Peter Block, immediately disowns his daughter as she is a disgrace in the eyes of the community as she is unmarried. The resulting narrative could be Wiebe's attempt at drawing parallels between the hierarchy of the Mennonite community as a whole and Block's actions. Block intends to shroud the whole episode in secrecy non-withstanding the fact that everyone seems to know that something has been amiss with Elizabeth for a while. Thom, who actually saw Elizabeth fall to the ground suddenly realises as he sees her fall that, "[I]t was as if she had been falling always and the last instant of it had been revealed to him." (141) When Thom asks Dr Goodridge about the cause of Elizabeth's death, "Was it – work?" Goodridge answers somewhat evasively, "People don't die from working. It was just an internal disorder that got out of control. The thread of life is sometimes very thin. Good-bye, Thom." Wiebe builds up a very convincing picture of sordid secrecy, where questions are ignored, and the truth twisted. Block swings into

control – buying off or simply bullying potential witnesses to the event. There are tangible parallels with the way the Mennonite community is being managed by the church elders. Wiebe portrays Block as a cult-like leader, so preoccupied with keeping the congregation from the allures of the world outside, he gets bogged down in a mire of half-lies and deception:

> Mrs Block's thoughts were chaos. No one knew or suspected. Mrs Wiens [Thom's mother] had promised, [not to reveal the truth] but it would remain the open scar upon their conscience, festering to their last day. As she had never really comprehended the massive mental power of her husband, she now had no idea what he thought. He was as steel in everything he did. But the subterfuge: to unscrew the coffin-lid at night and place the towel-wrapped bundle in the empty lap. (Wiebe,152)

The next passage, concerning Elizabeth's funeral, is one of Wiebe's most descriptive ones. The author proceeds to describe in great detail the actual funeral ceremony: The coldness of the church itself, the sadness of the community's loss and the flashbacks to Elizabeth's past in Orenburg, Russia. Wiebe makes use of the funeral scene as a tool with which he summarizes the thoughts of each of the principal characters. Pete, Elizabeth's brother, mulls over what he seems to have overlooked, just as Thom himself did. Pete suddenly realises how many things Elizabeth alluded to without him actually comprehending them. It is as if a fog has lifted but unfortunately, much too late. Wiebe appears to be suggesting that the women in the community have been for simply too long "heard but not listened to." Elizabeth, the reader senses, was not only speaking as an unmarried woman craving marriage and children, but also as an all-seeing bystander, wanting to help and advise yet at the same time, remaining unheeded. Block is depicted as a cold calculating, unfeeling father who, even as he sits in the pew at his daughter's funeral, is planning how to drive Louis, the apparent father of Elizabeth's stillborn child, from the community:

> Block heard no word that was being said. He was staring at the bench-back, his eyes ashen-dry. In the three days, the stupefying shock had worn away. Those three days he roved in madness, for Elizabeth had said no word before she died and he could not but see her as eternally damned for her sin. If she had only confessed and asked for forgiveness […] whenever his mind led him to what must have occurred that spring on his very farm-yard […] The breeds must go. Too many years he had allowed them to remain on the edge of the settlement, where their dark wolfish faces could betray weak women. It must have been Louis. There was no other man possible. He would buy them out personally, every one of them, and send them all to wherever their animal natures could

> destroy themselves without involving others. His fist clenched at his temple. (Wiebe, 154)

The description of Elizabeth's burial itself is one loaded with symbolism. The demonizing of the new schoolteacher Razia continues. If in the previous scenes Wiebe accentuates all Razia's relatively harmless sins representing the modern world and abhorrent to the Mennonite faith – from smoking cigarettes to listening to the radio – he seems to have chosen Razia at Elizabeth's grave as the symbol of something altogether more unsettling:

> […] Thom was down in the grave, his feet precise on the edge of the white box framing the black, pulling the ropes through carefully. Then balancing on the edge, he levered the lid up and over the black coffin. As he looked up and caught the screw-driver, bending forward, he saw the elongated bodies and heads of the people dividing the slate sky and the grave's rim staring down at him. At a corner, beyond the granite form of Block, he glimpsed a woman's face he had never seen before. It terrified him, somehow, to hunch in Elizabeth's grave, feet at on her coffin-box, and look up to see all Wapiti – and that sharp new face. […] Herb was looking at the strange woman. Thom thought, in some remote portion of his mind, that must be the new teacher. Why did her narrow face look like death's-head from down there, beyond Block's shoulder? (Wiebe,157)

At one moment, Wiebe seems to be almost sympathetic to the ideas of the more moderate members of the Mennonite community, especially in the way he presents Elizabeth's warning to Thom, and yet at the next moment he accords Razia extremely negative connotations – her face terrifies Thom, who sees in it a death head. Maybe Wiebe, in spite of championing for change in Mennonite thinking, is warning the community that this change must come from within, from people like Joseph, from Thom's sister Margaret, and finally from Thom himself. The inference is that this new addition to the community – Razia – can only bring decadence and despair, but that if the Mennonite themselves take the leading role in making the necessary changes, all will be well. This opinion seems to be reinforced by the amount of attention Wiebe pays to details portraying the previous schoolteacher Joseph. Whereas Razia is personification of the irreverence of life outside the community, Joseph is portrayed as the new thinker, a sort of fresh breeze in Mennonite thinking – progressive without being dangerous. Wiebe delivers Joseph's thoughts concerning religious matters to us via the schoolteacher's letters to Thom. In one of these letters Joseph writes:

> Don't jump to the conclusion that only the Mennonite branch of the Christian church has made mistakes. […] Other churches seem to be bound as rigidly by tradition as our Mennonite church: they in insisting that, if there is a war, their members should use force to end it, we in holding to peace at all costs. Our tradition is made more obvious by being in opposition to that of the majority. I am convinced that their position is contrary to Christ's teaching, but I am not sure that ours is very much better. (Wiebe, 161)

This, Wiebe is possibly trying to accentuate, is the way forward for Mennonites – to be tolerant of other denominations, to accept their own mistakes, and make gradual changes in the organisation of the church and so prevent an uncontrolled relaxation of all that makes the Mennonite distinctive. This does though seem to have been the correct strategy as evidenced by T. G. Regehr in 1996, in *Mennonites in Canada* where, in the chapter entitled *Preparing the next generation*, he quotes Delbert Wiens, an American Mennonite Brethern philosopher, who likens religious principles to wine, and time and place as the container or wineskin – changing times and circumstances make it necessary to replace the old wineskins if the wine is to be preserved:

> The old form of leadership, in its time and place, achieved impressive results. But we cannot simply translate the old forms into the present. The specifics are often irrelevant to a new time or place. We need methods and answers for a particular time and place, not carry over all the old specifics, but we need to discover the old spirit. Grounding ourselves in the past, we must learn to do in our own way for our time what our grandfathers achieved in their own time in their way. (Regehr, 300)

7. 3. The Power of Language and Dreams

Another literary tool used by Wiebe in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* is that of dreams – the most imposing example being Thom's dream – or more specifically nightmare – on the night of Elizabeth's burial. Having fallen asleep, Thom finds himself in the bush fighting imaginary brutes, and becoming entangled in the bush itself. Suddenly, he was free, as if he were standing on a look-out tower, high above the bush. He could see light coming towards him, closer and closer until he could see that it was an intensely burning fire. Eventually Thom was completely surrounded by a "furnace moaning and crashing and hissing and breaking where the very light blotted his vision to blackness." (165) Thom then awakes in bed:

> He lay rigid while the death-fear dripped torturously from him, but long minutes passed before he could open his eyes at the darkness. He pulled

> Hal [his younger brother] tight, but the sight would not leave. The sight of the wide miles of burned bush opened Wapiti to the world. And the sight of the widening circle about the glowing coal before it burst into flame at his feet. (Wiebe, 165)

The symbolism here is in fact rather clumsy – evidently the burning bush is meant to represent the impending dangers of the modern world outside the Mennonite community. In Thom's dream the modern world has obviously eaten into all that the Mennonites believe in, leaving them naked and unprotected before all. As has been stated at the opening of this paper, this is of course the chief issue for the Mennonites – survival as a minority. That a powerful tool in the promotion of any cause including religion can be language itself is proven by Wiebe in another passage of Joseph's letter, where he plays with the word peace. Joseph writes, "We make great use of the word 'peace'. We quote Mathew glibly: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God'. Yet how can we make peace?" (162) Joseph commences to point out that the word peace can mean to be in a state of restfulness, to be silent. He also remarks to Thom that the German equivalent of peace "Frieden" is frequently used in Mennonite services when a complex issue is being considered. "As long as everything goes smoothly and they themselves cannot be blamed," Joseph writes somewhat sarcastically, "peace is being maintained." (162) Paradoxically, Joseph explains, the angels in the New Testament sang Peace on earth shortly after all the babes of Bethlehem were slaughtered because of the birth of Christ. Christ, Joseph continues, did not come to bring peace on earth, but rather to bring a sort of inward peace that is in no way affected by outward factors.

8. Racism in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*

8. 1. British Supremacy

Another theme touched upon by Wiebe in his novel is that of racism. That racism was present at an early stage in Canada's history has been established at the outset of this paper. In early stages of settling that country, racism was predominately directed by Anglo-Saxon settlers at other settlers of non-Anglo-Saxon origin. This assertion is given much credit by Terrence A. Craig in *Racial Attitudes in English-Canadian Fiction*, where the author writes that any racial opinions finding their way into Canadian fiction in English "[W]ere mainly those supporting the supremacy of English-Canadian upper-class interests and reflected a static, conservative view of society." (25) Even non-fiction and periodicals, we learn from Craig, presented a similarly racial view which was only strengthened after 1900 as immigration was increasingly viewed by Canadians as a direct threat to themselves. Craig mentions J. S. Woodworth, the superintendent of a Methodist mission in the city of Winnipeg who, in a pseudosociological study *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909), describes the pressure of immigration going through that city. Although Craig gives Woodworth credit for attacking the problem, albeit from a religious standpoint, he points out that Woodworth was at the time still a supporter of the British Empire:

> Woodworth hoped to see Canada grow to become a stronger component within it, and to that end he pointed out the need to maintain the British majority by selective immigration: "We need more of our own blood to assist us to maintain in Canada our British traditions and to mould the incoming armies of foreigners into loyal British subjects." This was the cornerstone of the English-Canadian attitude – the maintenance of the British political, economic, and cultural system that ensured their social superiority as not only the rule-making group but the commercially pre-eminent group as well. (Craig, 26)

8. 2. The Mennonites and the Métis

In his novel though, Wiebe concentrates on elements of racism within the Mennonite community. In a masterly twist the author manages to introduce the theme of racism into the passage concerning Block's daughter Elizabeth's death. Through Block's actions after his daughter's death the reader becomes slowly aware of the Mennonite leaders' attitude to the Métis people – a so-called "half-breed" people, half European and half native. Although many from the Mennonite community seem to accept the

existence of the Métis people, most tend to see them as outsiders, unworthy of Mennonite charity. This indeed is an aspect of *Peace Shall Destroy Many* which Craig in *Racial Attitudes in English-Canadian Fiction*, also addresses. Craig gives the example of Block, who is shocked to find that his recently deceased daughter had slept with a Métis man, Louis Moosomin, schemes to get rid of not just Louis, but of the whole community by buying out their land and Craig theorizes that:

> Block, the old-style Mennonite leader, is out of place in Canada and out of time with his own religion, a man caught between theory and practice, crushed inwardly by the self knowledge that he does wrong but must do wrong. The failure of the Mennonites to live with the rest of Canada is shown further by their single concession to the obligatory conversation of others – the sending of a missionary couple to India instead of facing up to their responsibilities among the Métis in their midst. (Craig, 130)

In Wiebe's novel even the normally tolerant and thoughtful Thom is incensed by Block's behaviour towards the Métis. Thom has been teaching some of the Métis children and now realises why they did not come to their last Sunday lesson. He accuses Block of planning this for some time when he hears that he has bought the Métis' farm. Block is quite composed when he answers Thom, "Do you think I'd have allowed someone from our community to become as involved with the breeds as you have if I thought they'd be staying here for years to come?" (206) This then seems to be the final straw for Thom and his defence of traditional Mennonite values held by the church elders. Everything is evidently leading to a final crisis as Thom is stripped of all his naïve beliefs, opinions he has held in spite of not being too sure as to how to defend them. And now he finds that Block has been involved in regulating every aspect of the community:

> All these months Block had deigned no mention of his plan. This man handled everyone, Mennonite and half-breed, as if they were pieces of farm machinery: each pawn had a particular spot in his scheme, each was told what to believe and what to denounce. Each had small significance beyond covering his spot. You there, and you there! Could someone merely be ordered: Believe! Holding himself rigidly controlled, needing to know more, he said, "You say we must be taught to believe the right. What about the new school-teacher? She isn't a Christian. Is she going to go on teaching the small children – " (Wiebe, 207)

Toward the close of the novel the theme of racism seems to take precedence over all else: specifically whether there is any point in teaching the scriptures to those other than Mennonites. Wiebe portrays Thom as a person who is lost in a wilderness. Thom

turns to his friend Peter Block and, eventually to his own mother in his craving for answers to a whole array of crucial questions. The dilemma of seeking help in a small community is dramatically evident in Wiebe's carefully crafted dialogues. In confiding in Peter Block, Thom suddenly finds that he has come full circle and is encountering the same mistrust, albeit on a much more friendly level, as he experienced from Peter's father, the Deacon. Obviously echoing his father's sentiments, Peter queries not only Thom's preoccupation with teaching non-Mennonite children, but also his reasons for travelling to the half-breeds himself instead of teaching them at the school-house. Thom argues that the Mennonites have plenty of teachers, he says, "All I've done in our church is sing in the choir and make the opening twice at Young People's. Is that usefulness? I've been a church member for three years. These kids never heard the complete Bible once." (193) This is an issue commented on by Craig in the above extract from *Racial Attitudes in English-Canadian Fiction*: Spreading the Gospel to the further, more exotic corners of the world is much more attractive to the Mennonite elders than trying to build bridges with their nearest neighbours. Thom argues with Pete that the half-breeds may eventually join the church:

> What church? [Pete argues] relentlessly.
>
> "Well, there's only one church in Wapiti – I guess – "
>
> "But you can't. They can't join our church. "The words hung in the darkness a moment. "They don't live like us. You were in that cabin all afternoon – and she had even tried to clean up a bit. They're like – and they speak Cree and English. You know they could never become members of our Mennonite church. Look what happened to Herman. They're just not like us."
>
> "You know what you're saying, Pete? We sing mightily, 'It is Well With My Soul' and let our neighbours die as heathen because they eat moose-meat instead of borscht for Sunday dinner!" (Wiebe, 194)

Likewise in conversation with his mother, Thom encounters the same obstacles as he did in conversation with his friend Pete. This conversation concerns the Unger family, one of their sons, the Wien's nearest neighbour Herb, professes his disinterest in everything religious in spite of the fact that his parents are apparently respected members of the Mennonite community. Herb's brother, Hank, is a military fighter pilot, fighting against the Nazis. Each of these characters has been introduced by Wiebe gradually throughout the novel. Towards toward the end Wiebe finally puts them all together, almost as if he were comparing them with each other. There does indeed seem

to be an element of symbolism here: The older Ungars – appear to represent the staid, conservative heart of the Mennonite community, Herb – the disinterested rebel who sees no role for religion in the community, and finally Hank, one of the community members who has chosen to break one of the cardinal rules of the Mennonites in taking part in the war as a soldier. Towards the end of the novel, these four people seemingly come to represent a society to come, almost like an enemy within – a picture of what is raging without. Thom is perplexed about the Unger family, he speculates about Mrs Unger's relationship with Herb, saying:

> "Ah Mom, I sometimes wonder if Mrs Unger cares much about Herb, one way or another. Hank's the precious boy."
>
> "Thom, she's deeply grieved her son has gone that way in the Air Force. She – "
>
> "Her words say she's sorry, but not the look on her face when she makes sure everyone knows how many Germans her 'lost sheep' has shot down. If she'd do a bit more for the son she has here – " (Wiebe, 214)

Towards the end of Thom's conversation with his mother he gets back to the question of the half-breed children and says something that summarizes the whole theme of racism in the Mennonite community, he says, "And why must we in Wapiti love only Mennonites?" (215) He continues insistently, seeking justification for the work he has done with the non-Mennonite children. He contemplates the usefulness of spending half a year spreading the Gospel in order to, as he says, "Salve my conscience for half a year with a salve that doesn't exist." His mother considers Thom's words and replies, "I cannot see how it would work, either. Perhaps we would – somehow – be fit to cross that bridge once it had faced us for a time." This statement could easily be interpreted as the typical Mennonite reaction at that time – a sort of "bury-your-head-in-the-sand" approach – almost as if nobody could see the impending changes in Canadian society. In contemplating all that any substantial changes would involve, Thom's mother shakes her head and almost shudders saying, "Too many things would have to break. It would be fearful." In this final remark on the subject from Thom's mother Wiebe seems to be saying that there is no hope of reforming Wapiti society from within and that the role of reformer will be left to outside influences.

8. 3. Confusion in the Community

Throughout his novel, Wiebe interweaves a seemingly chaotic group of themes incidents and characters: Block's underhand scheming, the mystery surrounding Elizabeth's death, the symbolism of Razia, and finally, the arrival of the war hero Hank Unger. But it is an entirely logical culmination of affairs – it is as if the floodwaters are lapping at the door: The floodwaters of change, ignored for so long. But in the final chapters of the novel Wiebe proves that it all has some significance as a complete unit. Thom perceives the cause of Elizabeth's death to be the key to his understanding all the preceding events, in fact maybe even the key to the Mennonites' future. Thom insists in his mother telling him why Elizabeth died, assuring her that he is not pursuing a personal vendetta saying, "Mother, I don't want to know because I want to blame anyone. I *have* to know for myself." (217) Thom senses some connection between Elizabeth's death and those few startling words she said to him about it being imperative that he get out of Wapiti in order not to be buried under rules, "as important as this chaff." (140) Indeed, the theme of rule seems to play a pivotal role in the final part of the novel. The only answer Thom's mother can offer him concerning Elizabeth's death is that she has given her word not to tell anyone anything, but that, "[W]hat happened to Elizabeth was brought on her by her father's strictness as well as her own falling. It cannot matter to you what it was. They were both partly to blame." (218) In relating Thom's answer to his mother's explanation, Wiebe seems to be portraying Thom's rational transformation – from someone reasoning according to the tried and tested official guidelines, to someone who is not just finally questioning those selfsame guidelines but also the actions of those that created them. Thom argues:

> "Okay. They were both partly to blame. But no one in Wapiti has Mr Block say that he had a large share in bringing his daughter to her grave. He is still the great man, getting rid of undesirables, running church, store, school, all our business with the government: he is Deacon; everyone's quiet and peaceful when he speaks. He – " […] " So he helped us! We would have survived somehow in this land without him. Others did. […] He keeps us behind this bush away from all the world as if he were one of those mind-scientists who takes rats and puts them in cages and sees how they jump when he sticks them with pins. Behind all this bush, do we have to be the rats of Block and our forefathers? Whenever they jab us, we know what to believe? We don't owe them our souls!" (Wiebe, 218)

Eventually however, Thom learns the truth about Elizabeth's death and about the fact that she was carrying Louis Moosomin's child. He is also however, becoming increasingly aware of the latent racism in Block's actions, and of the way the Wapiti community, and the Wiens, seem to be infinitely indebted to Block for helping them settle in their adopted homeland – Canada. Wiebe seems to have made his point here and it is quite evident to the reader too: Observe the rule, which incidentally helped us to hitherto survive in this harsh, unfriendly environment and all will be well with you. Whatever you do, do not question them – we, the leaders, have found from past experience that they work well enough for us. Transgress these rules and the consequences will be dire. At this point in the narrative Wiebe could have possibly finished. He has built up a riveting narrative which as research into the historical facts has shown, affords the novel a certain additional feeling of authenticity.

9. Sexual Desire and Morality in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*

The final passage however abounds in sexual and moral symbolism – parables from the Bible are mixed with everyday Wapiti life. From Hank Unger's boastful accounts of shooting down German enemy fighters, through the description of the Christmas concert, to his and Razia's suggested sexual encounter at the schoolhouse – all are evidently intended to provoke the reader into contemplating the intricacies of a changing life in a God-fearing community.

All the community has conglomerated in the schoolhouse to witness the Christmas concert, the main organiser being Razia herself. Razia seems to be the embodiment of hypocrisy in the passage concerning the concert as she, as a non-Christian, still manages to put on, what Deacon Block describes as the best concert in recent years:

> In training herself, Razia had been thorough. She could succeed in anything she wanted to, no matter what she thought of it, and pride welled in her at the way she had trained the children for this program without a single person knowing what she thought of the semi-religious doggerel Christmas concerts that, under Mennonite teachers, seemed tradition at Wapiti school. Unknowing half-breeds and innocent Mennonites! In her power she had gone even a step further towards religion than was usually the case. There would be no usual "Santa and Brownies" affair. If they liked religion, she could dish it up. (228)

A further blatantly obvious symbol is that of Hank Unger, an almost inexplicable and totally discordant element for the Mennonites up to that period in the community. Hank is one of their own, albeit a self-professed non-believer, in full military uniform, baiting the conscientious objectors, bragging about his battle exploits in which he shoots down, and in effect kills German fighter pilots. Hank seems to symbolise the intrusion of the outside world into the Wapiti community: And in the manner in which Wiebe introduces this theme it is obvious that he is trying to emphasize that it is an intrusion of a permanent kind, judging by the universal approval Hank's jibs at Thom are met with: "Well, well, who have we here? Thomas Wiens! How's the milkin' goin', big boy? Always told the Old Man that I wasn't wastin' my life doing what any calf could do better," and the roar filled through the room." (Wiebe, 224)

The nativity scene, prepared by Razia during the school concert and described in the final chapter, is also deftly used by Wiebe to illustrate further parallels between

Biblical scenes and Thom's burning questions. Thom, watching the make-believe Three Kings following the Star, contemplates their dialogue as they enter the proverbial barn:

> As they approached the building, they hesitated, gazing up at the sky and then back at one another, questioning. There was a stir inside the hovel, and then, bending low, a young shepherd emerged and stood before them, his crook in his hand. The first man said quietly, "Is this the place?" And the shepherd – Thom recognized Jackie Labret – smiled and said, "It is. Enter with me, O Kings – and kiss the feet of God." […] For Thom the marvel that Razia could initiate such a play was drowned in his own conflict. He could follow the kings in their quest, but when they bent and entered he was blocked. They found the answer of their search in that barn in Bethlehem, but his answer? (Wiebe, 232)

The sexual element of the novel is also most evident in the closing chapter. The sex is only inferred and indeed Wiebe seems to be using it to symbolize the mixing of the races – as in the case of Elizabeth Block and Louis Moosomin, or the mixing of the religions – as in the case of Hank Unger and Razia Tantamont. It is as if the author were saying that the borderline between the Mennonite and the world outside their community will become gradually more indefinite. Wiebe though, appears to be reassuring the reader that all is not lost, that even though Thom is himself surprised at how he views Razia and how he views his own girlfriend Annamarie – the former physically and the latter spiritually – he is also capable of defining which of these two views is relevant for him. It is a parallel with almost Garden of Eden properties – temptation and forbidden fruit:

> The body, the body, the body. It was impossible to think of Annamarie in that way, but Razia – he found that if he allowed his mind a corner of leeway he could think in unison with Herb. The realisation staggered him. His mind strange to such thoughts went fumbling after the tantalizing figure in the tight green dress. Such wells of depravity yawned in his empty self that he could only shudder and pray for diversion. (Wiebe, 227)

The novel culminates in a confusing scene, in a barn outside the schoolhouse where there is a confrontation between Razia, Thom Pete, Hank and Herb, witnessed by other members of the Wapiti community. In the scene there are allusions to sex, jealousy, innocence and naivety – all of these seeming to represent the issues being addressed by the novel itself. Innocence and naivety could be how Wiebe has decided to represent the way the leaders of the Mennonite community view the future, the hints at sex and

jealousy, on the other hand could be alluding to the temptations of the outside world: temptations against which people such as Deacon Block were, in Wiebe's eyes it seems, incapable of protecting the community against. Regehr, in *Mennonites in Canada 1939-1970*, is also rather sceptical, noting that:

> Canadian Mennonite anxieties and misinformation regarding sexual matters collide in the 1940s with rapidly changing attitudes and concerns by other Canadians. […] Military authorities were appalled at the sexual ignorance of some recruits and offered tough, realistic, often crude instruction dealing particularly with sexually transmitted diseases and the very unpleasant way in which military doctors dealt with such problems. (Regehr, 215)

But the Mennonites' innocence was to be tried in the post-war years in all areas of life – from religious life, through the modernisation of farming methods to financial matters – all of which Wiebe alludes to in his novel. Indeed, the latter two issues seem to have spelt the final blow to the rigid segregation of the Mennonite and non-Mennonite communities as Regehr explains:

> There were economies of scale that [Mennonite] farmers could achieve only if they expanded one branch of their operations and withdrew from others. The results were often dramatic. The traditional association among family, farm and community was broken. Mechanization, capitalization, intensification and rationalization forced most Canadian Mennonite farmers to pay more attention to the dictates of the market than to family, church, or community concerns. (Regehr, 146)

Another writer dealing with Mennonite issues in general, Paul Towes, demonstrates that the misgivings of Wiebe's characters concerning their fears for the Mennonite community's independence were well-founded. In his introduction to *Bridging Troubled Waters*: *Mennonite Brethren at Mid-Century*: he writes how the lure of new economic opportunities attracted people from rural regions within North America to the great cities. Towes remarks that, "[T]he percentage of Mennonite Brethren living within the cultural shadow of cities of fifty thousand or more residents more than doubled between 1941 and 1960." (xi) He expands on the significance of this fact further, writing that:

> The percentage jump from 10 percent to slightly more than 23 percent is significant, but even more so is that in California, Manitoba and Ontario, all regions with large Mennonite populations, the urban population approached 40 percent of the total. […] Increasing urbanization also accelerated the transition from German to English. (Towes, xi)

In writing *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, Wiebe has evidently made much use of his own experiences as a member of a small Mennonite community himself. Although he accentuates the fact that the novel is a work of fiction, it is quite clear that the novel, when compared with literature dealing with the fascinating history of the Mennonites, has taken as its basis key events and issues in that community's past. The recurring symbolism lends the novel an almost biblical nature in places, urging the reader to make his or her own conclusions, but could also be an expression of Wiebe's trepidation at being too open concerning controversial issues at the time of writing.

10. The Jews and Canadian Society

10. 1. Jews and Mennonites

The second area of Canadian immigrant literature to be considered in this paper is that of the Jewish minority. This is in no way a random choice, as the two minorities – Mennonite and Jewish – have many things in common, the most logical connection, of course being the German one. The Mennonites had fled Germany after re-emigrating there after escaping the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. In their case Germany was more of a stepping stone as opposed to the case of the more established Jews who later fled Germany in the wake of Hitler's anti-Semite pogroms. Both minorities therefore had much that united them, but also much that divided them. In *Peace Shall Destroy Many* Wiebe is surprisingly open about the hidden views of some members of the Mennonite community. He was in fact heavily criticized for baring some of the more controversial aspects of that minority for all to see. One of the chief reasons for the critics' outrage must surely be the passage where Joseph, the almost heretical Mennonite school teacher calls Thom's attention to certain unsettling undercurrents in Mennonite thinking. Joseph says:

> "Though Mennonites, because of their training, naturally abhor violence, yet they faintly admire it, somehow, in someone who thought 'hews to it'! And if Germans are involved, this unconscious admiration is even bolstered a bit by our almost nationalistic interest in Germany. After all, we are displaced Germans, at least ethnically, and because we haven't had a true home for 400 years, we subconsciously long for one. It will take this war to knock any silly German ideas out of our heads." (Wiebe, 30)

No wonder then that, in writings critical to Canada's treatment of the Jews in that country, we can find many allusions to anti-Semitism among members of the Mennonite community. These Mennonites, mainly poor farmers who sought prosperity in Canada, had brought with them the folk idea or stereotype of the Jew: Merchants hungry for money. A strong nationalist feeling towards Germany also led some Mennonites to find appeal in fascism and anti-Semitism. Many settled around the city of Winkler where the leader of a small fascist group, Laepky, admitted in 1937 that anti-Semitism was "naturally strong." A newspaper, *The Canadian Nationalist*, was printed in Winnipeg by the Publisher of a Mennonite church paper, Herman Neufeld. He praised Hitler and promoted Nazism among Mennonites. Proof of this can be found

in *Race, Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada* where the author, James W. Walker, records a case when a certain W. V. Tobias tested the libel Act, which concerns racial or religious slander:

> Tobias [a decorated war hero and prominent Winnipeg lawyer] won an injunction against the Canadian Nationalist, run by Arcand associates William Whittaker and Herman and Anna Neufeld, prohibiting the further publication of anti-Jewish allegations, in particular that Canadian Jews practised the ritual murder of innocent Christians. (Walker, 195)

The complexity of the issue of Mennonites and anti-Semitism is understandable considering the complex nature of that minority's history. In his study, *In Defence of Privilege: Russian Mennonites and the State Before and During World War I*, Abraham Friesen, Professor Emeritus of Renaissance and Reformation history at the University of California, explains the complexities of a minority that was constantly on the move. The chief dilemma for the Mennonites was that of national identity because after an 1861 Prussian bill abolished exemption from military service for Mennonites in Prussia, many fled to North America, and others ended up in autocratic Russia and were subsequently indebted to the Russian Tsarina. Friesen notes that, "Still, others, however remained in the land [Prussia], eventually accommodating themselves to the prevailing military requirements and gradually becoming ardent Prussians." (Friesen, 7-8) The issue became more complex in 1914 when Russia declared war on Germany, which was a disastrous event for the Mennonites who were in essence minority ethnic Germans. Friesen quotes a high-ranking official in the Russian Ministry of Agriculture of the period commenting on the Mennonites presence in that country:

> All this, with one stroke of the pen, will now belong to us. Riches worth billions will fall to us through decrees being prepared at the highest levels; for these Germans will be driven from their lands, and then we will settle our returning victorious veterans on them […] Don't you know that […] they [Prussian Mennonites] possess a dual citizenship making them subjects in Russia and also Germany? It is only right that we dispossess these spies of their homes and property. (Friesen, 211)

10. 2. Jews and Canadians

It would be unfair however to state that anti-Semitism was more prevalent among the Mennonites than among other ethnic groups, their role in such activities was indeed a minor one. The Canadian National Party – the CNP – was basically established by

Anglo-Saxon ex-soldiers the most active being a certain Whittaker from Britain. According to Jonathan Fine in an essay for the *Manitoba Historical Society* website – *Anti-Semitism in Manitoba in the 1930s and 1940s*, "Whittaker's organization was modelled on the Nazi storm troopers. Whittaker and his followers would parade around wearing khaki shirts and riding boots. His Brown Shirts would antagonistically march through Jewish areas of Winnipeg." (mhs.mb.ca) Furthermore, in *Antisemitism in Canada: history and interpretation* one of the contributors, Howard Palmer, dealing with the issue of Antisemitism in Alberta, describes the early years of Jewish immigration to Canada as a relatively conflict-free period. According to him this fact can be attributed to the fact that the numbers of immigrants of Jewish origin were extremely low, thereby rendering them rather inconspicuous. The predominately Anglo-Saxon Protestant population of the period had almost total control of all aspects of society from political and legal to educational – an issue which is mentioned at a later stage of this work. This meant that a local pecking order had been established early on, placing British and American immigrants at the top of the list, with northern Europeans a close second, and Jews at the very bottom. Yet, as Palmer accentuates, "racial anti-Semitism, based on notions of Jewish racial inferiority, was limited." (Davies, 169)

The situation was to change dramatically however with the onset of events in Europe from the 1930s. During the Depression, the working class turned increasingly to the Communist party for inspiration, whereas radical farm leaders tried to unite the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) with the socialist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). "However," Palmer notes, "the political sensation of the era was Social Credit, a new and dynamic movement pledged to cure a sick economy, with a leader, William Aberhart, whose charismatic qualities matched the needs of a people hungry for authoritative guidance." (Davies, 172) Palmer goes on to describe a scenario all too familiar to Jews at the time leading up to the Second World War:

> Antisemitism was not central to tin party propaganda. However, prompted by Douglas's [Major Douglas, founder of the Social Credit party] writings and the American populist legacy, it emerged in one wing of the movement. Major Douglas himself was an arch anti-Semite. His books and articles referred approvingly to the notorious anti-Semitic forgery, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, which told of a Jewish plot to achieve world domination. […] The economic devastation of the Depression, the need for scapegoats, the mythological link between Jews

> and money and the virtual absence of "real" Jews in much of rural Alberta were all conducive to the rise of anti-Semitism. (Davies, 172-173)

The above citation could seem to be almost irrelevant in connection with the second novel dealt with in this work, Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice.* In fact he novel contains very few explicit references to anti-Semitism in Canada. There are however subtle references, for example in one of the children's dialogues when Dmitri, the bully, provokes a fight among the children. Dmitri's sister is friendly towards Moses - Abraham's grandson – and when the children choose sides, Dmitri calls tauntingly to Moses, "Okay we'll let my sister Junie fight on your side. Junie Jew-lover." (Wiseman, 167) Palmer's words have however, direct relevance to Wiseman's novel in that they back up the general impression from reading the novel, and from studies on Jews in Canada (cited in this work), that Jews in Canada were indeed concentrated in urban rather than rural areas.

11. The Community in *The Sacrifice*

11. 1. The Setting

The first marked difference between the two novels is the setting. Although both are set in Canada, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* is a novel of rural life. This is a fact which seems to have its roots in history and is the complete opposite to Wiseman's novel, which is set in a city. That the Mennonites are a predominantly rural community is quite clear from the context of the novel, and also from the secondary literature quoted in this work. Indeed the Mennonites clearly prefer the remoteness of the Canadian wilds, something which is especially relevant to their aim of maintaining their independence and traditional way of life. Wiebe's descriptions of the Mennonite community's surroundings of Saskatchewan make up for the lack of colour in his protagonists' dialogues. The remoteness of the farms from one another, the immense distance from towns, and the hard, daunting labour necessary to eke out an existence in such a beautiful, yet harsh landscape are all evident from the intricate descriptions. In *The Sacrifice*, Wiseman does not however supply the reader with much detail concerning the environment where Abraham and his family live. Neither do the seasons seem to bear any importance for this novel. The reader learns from the very beginning that this is primarily a story about urban life.

At the opening of the novel Wiseman describes how Isaac - Abraham's son – sets out to explore the city, whose name is incidentally never mentioned. Isaac walks to school, learning the contours of the city noticing that, "The city rose about him, planted on an undulating countryside that seemed to have spilled over from the ridge of dark hills in the western distance." (12) The only significant landmark mentioned is the mountain, looming in the background. This landmark turns out to be symbolic for the novel, as the reader learns later on, when Abraham is detained at the asylum for the mentally unstable situated on its slopes. That Wiseman chose an urban environment for her novel is probably not a mere coincidence, as sources dealing with Jewish immigration into Canada point out that, Jewish communities thrived in similar environments. Indeed, any attempts to channel Jewish immigrants into rural areas of Canada seem to have been unsuccessful. Harold Troper in his article entitled *New Horizons in a New Land: Jewish Immigration to Canada* on the B'nai Brith Canada Jewish community website writes that:

> Although growth in Jewish numbers was dramatic, it was not the simple numbers that impressed itself on the public mind. Far more disturbing was the increasing realization that Jews, more than any other group, stood defiant of the social and economic assumptions on which Canadian immigration policy was built. Like the European Jew who found his way to London and New York, the Jews arriving in Canada demonstrated little inclination to farm, mine or work the lumbering frontier. Whatever they did in Europe, in Canada Jews were overwhelmingly city dwellers. (www.bnaibrith.ca)

11. 2. Rich Dialogues

There are marked similarities and marked differences between the two minorities in the way they have been persecuted and pursued from country to country, and in the manner in which their religion has been portrayed. The same could be said for the two novels analyzed in this paper: Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and, in this section, Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice.* Much like Rudy Wiebe, Wiseman addresses themes concerning integration, language and, to a lesser degree, religion. From Wiseman's novel however the reader gains the impression that the characters portrayed in that work are more concerned with integrating into Canadian society. There are no signs of a confrontation between pro-integrators and anti-integrators as there is in Wiebe's novel. Indeed, the general impression from Wiseman's novel is that the Jewish community is intent on becoming an integral part of Canadian society in as short a time as possible.

The opening passage of Wiseman's novel is very descriptive. In it Wiseman describes the initial experiences of the protagonists – a young Jewish family: Abraham and Sarah with their young son Isaac – on their arrival in the Canadian west after travelling for months from Russia. In a few short paragraphs Wiseman manages to convey an interestingly diverse picture of hope and resignation on the part of the Jewish family as they make their way towards a better and safer life on a train travelling across Canada. The theme is that of the typical plight of the Jewish people moving from place to place in search of a place to settle without discrimination or persecution. The scene is one of a train, dimly lit and packed, rushing across the darkened countryside in the night. In a snap decision, Abraham suddenly decides to get off the train together with

his wife and son. The family's life, Wiseman seems to be accentuating, starts at this point in time. Abraham seems to put whatever happened before behind him, as if it were a necessary evil. In this respect Wiseman's portrayal of the Jewish immigrants differs from that of Wiebe's portrayal of the Mennonites. Wiseman's protagonist is much less preoccupied with observing tradition than with finally putting down roots and getting on in life. When Isaac questions his father's decision to leave the train so suddenly, his father retorts, "The important thing now, is that we must stop running from death and from every other insult. We will seize our lives in these scarred hands again." The ensuing passage conveys Abraham's hopes for the future.

> Then, with the new day, to settle themselves gingerly on the crust of the city, perhaps someday even to send down a few roots – those roots, pre-numbed and shallow, of the often uprooted. But strong. Abraham felt strength surge up in him, excitement shaking the tiredness out of his body. No matter what is done to the plant, when it falls, again it will send out the tentative roots to the earth and rise upward again to the sky. (Wiseman, 6)

The manner in which the issue of communication is approached in both novels is completely different. *In The Sacrifice*, great attention is paid to the way in which Wiseman's characters react. Where the Mennonites in Peace Shall Destroy Many seem to be wary of communicating on any other theme than work or religion, the Jewish community in *The Sacrifice* seem, on the other hand, to take great joy from communicating together on any, even the most banal topic. Wiseman pays special attention to these verbal battles throughout the novel. Often, the personal qualities of the protagonists can be inferred purely from the manner in which he or she speaks. There is an almost stereotypical "Jewish" quality to these dialogues, full of innuendo and wry humour, with the joke often on the speaker himself or herself. Early on in the novel Abraham, with his family, find lodgings with a Jewish family in a small unnamed Canadian town and the ensuing dialogue is typical for much of Wiseman's novel. Mrs Popler, the landlady after showing her new tenants, Abraham and his family, their room and urging them to make themselves at home, then proceeds to spread the news of her good deed:

> At the grocery she mentioned that she had taken an immigrant family into her house, people she knew nothing about, that they had taken baths already, that she had served them tea, that the husband was a butcher, that they were resting at present, and that it was hard for two families to share one bathtub.

> When her husband came home she told him that she had finally rented the furnished room to an immigrant family, that the husband was a butcher who didn't have a job yet, though they'd paid rent in advance, that they were present asleep in their room, that they had taken baths already, and that she wondered how often they intended to take baths, all three of them. (Wiseman, 8)

It is in fact through these very dialogues that Wiseman seems to be trying to make the novel specifically "Jewish". This is evident for example in the dialogue among the workers at Polsky's butcher shop, where Abraham has found work. Abraham's co-worker, Chaim Knopp, relates how, in the old country, he used to kill chickens for the local people and they would pay him in chickens. He would end up with one live chicken which he would then endeavour to sell at the market in order to buy – paradoxically – meat as he could not stand the taste of chicken after killing them all day long. There is a note of self-depreciation in this, and indeed in many other such conversations in the novel. The author seems to be pointing out that yes, we Jews do have a reputation for making money, but we also have social feelings for our fellow, less fortunate, citizens. The humorous downside of course being that Chaim has thus complicated his life. Another important aspect involved in this same conversation of course being that of the complications involved in the killing of animals and the consumption of meat in the Jewish community. Chaim's wife, Bassieh, cannot understand him wanting to buy meat when he already has chicken. Everybody hoards chickens for special occasions she argues. But Chaim tells his audience, "When you kill a chicken and the rest set up a din, everybody for miles around says, 'Those rich Jews, all the chickens that fellow has running around.' My wife, this makes her a *grade damme*, even if sometimes there's no bread to eat the chicken with." (40)

11. 3. Language

In the *Sacrifice* the author's approach to language in itself is also totally different. In *Peace Shall Destroy Many* the English language becomes a bone of contention between the younger and older members of the community. In contrast, the community described in Wiseman's novel looks upon the English language as a way forward, a necessary stage in the process of becoming part of Canadian society. In spite of the fact that Abraham's son, Isaac, takes up a job at a clothing factory to help supplement his father's wages, he still intends to study English and teach religion to the younger members of the Jewish community. In chapter four we learn that:

> Of late he [Isaac] had taken to reading more and more books from the English library. That was something his father approved of. Books were to make something fine of him, an educated man. The Hebrew and the Yiddish books weren't enough. They dealt with past things, old solutions. Perhaps these books could answer the questions about his life, about people, the questions that sorely needed answering. But the books, though they pulled him further and further into themselves, brought him no close to certainties. Neither, when he turned from them to his life, was there any certainty. What new friend could yield him an answer to his unvoiced question, "You, are you good or bad?" What action could answer definitely to the demand, "Are you right or wrong?" (Wiseman, 62)

Here, Wiseman seems to be highlighting the fact that the Jewish immigrant community in Canada at this time in history is capable of reaching a compromise. It is almost as if the characters themselves are saying that they realise the importance of preserving their identity, but at the same time they recognise the fact that to get on in life in contemporary Canada, certain compromises are necessary. In fact Abraham himself, in spite of being tolerant towards Isaac's studies, remarks that, "The boy was at home altogether too much with his books, some of which, from the things he had come out with lately, were downright irreligious." (75)

Rebecca Margolis, from the University of Ottawa, studies the language issue of Jewish immigrants to Canada in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, a journal on the University of Saskatchewan website. In it she describes the way in which Jewish immigrants who settled in Canada approached the language dilemma. Margolis explains that even though most of the Jewish immigrants who settled in that country between 1890 and 1950 claimed Yiddish as their mother tongue, "They were also adopting English as their lingua franca. A shift away from Yiddish as the lingua franca of the Jewish community was well underway by the 1920s, when the tightening of immigration laws reduced the arrival of new Yiddish-speaking Jews to a trickle until the late 1940s." (usak.ca) Margolis supplies evidence of the slow but steady Anglicization of the Jewish community in later years. According to her, "Between 1931 and 1951 the number of Jews declaring English as mother tongue increased from 2% to 51%."

Louis Rosenberg shows how zealous the Canadian Jews were concerning English language acquisition in *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s.* Here Rosenberg provides detailed tables with data concerning

the percentage of Jews unable to speak English in the respective provinces remarking that, “In none of the provinces was the percentage of Jews unable to speak English in 1931 higher than 3.87% and in British Columbia it was as low as 1.02%.” (255) In light of the fact that for many years to come the influx of Jews to Canada would stagnate, this could indeed be considered proof of that community's positive approach to acquiring English-Language skills.

12. Social Conflict in *The Sacrifice*

12. 1. Gender Issues

An interesting aspect of The Sacrifice is the almost complete absence of conflict between "native" Canadians and the Jewish immigrants. Any noted differences seem to be between the settled Jewish immigrants and the "Greenhorn" immigrants. This could be probably explained by the fact that Wiseman is actually describing life in a Jewish ghetto, although this fact is not specifically stated. From Mrs Plopler, who initially rents a room to Abraham's family, to Chaim Knopp's wife, all the women seem to feel duty-bound to help new incomers to their community, albeit with certain reservations as witnessed by Knopp's wife when asked by her him to spend more time with Abraham's wife. She remarks that, "She didn't have time to hold the hand of every immigrant who had a story to tell. What Jew hasn't a story?" (Wiseman, 74)

Indeed issues of feminism are addressed in greater detail within Wiseman's novel than in Wiebe's. Where Wiebe portrays the majority of the female characters in his novel as cheerless, grey, conservative women tending to their husbands unquestioningly, Wiseman's female characters seem to be good-humoured, animated and relatively emancipated. This could of course be accredited to the fact that Wiseman is herself a woman and may be therefore influenced by her own opinions on the subject. At the present time, there is relatively little reference to Jewish Feminism within Canadian literature, thereby making it quite difficult to investigate this issue. However, the author, Jeanne E. Abrams, in her work *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the American West*, studies the emancipation of Jewish women over the border from Canada in the USA. Abrams points out that in Portland in 1864, Jewish women gathered together to organize the first Jewish Ladies' Benevolent Society, "Dedicated to aiding ill and impoverished female co-religionists and their children." (43) Admittedly this activity was female-oriented and therefore not particularly momentous, Abrams continuous, citing the example of a Jewish woman in San Francisco, Hannah Marks Solomons, who indeed broke the mould in 1853 by supporting herself by teaching at a religious school and later serving at a school as the only female principal in San Francisco at the time. As Abrams herself writes, "The West clearly offered women many new opportunities for increased visibility through civic activism." (46) This indeed evidently corresponds with what Wiseman seems to

be pointing out: that the Jewish community were intent on getting on in the world, not willing to stand on the outskirts of society hiding behind their religion.

Wiseman's female characters – apart from Abraham's wife, Sarah – are portrayed as particularly strong-willed, as witnessed by the description of Bassieh Knopp. Her husband, Chaim, is the exact antithesis: a friendly man but without any great ambitions, and a great talker. Once again, Wiseman makes considerable use of humour as a literary device in describing Chaim and his expansive business plans. We learn that Chaim and Abraham are considering a partnership:

> They [Chaim and Abraham] had discussed the idea, examined it from every angle and in the light of every development in their respective lives, spent long hours in meeting imaginary obstacles, and repeatedly come to the conclusion that it would be a fine idea. It took some time for Abraham to realize that Chaim, even though he was the elder, would not make the first move. Gradually he began to understand that the soichet would be content not to make any move at all, just to talk. Having to make a move might even upset Chaim, considering all the real problems that it would present. So he gave up any idea of having the partnership become in reality a fact, although both he and Chaim continued to refer to it as an imminent possibility.
>
> At home it became a sort of joke, and Abraham explained to Ruth how one department of the partnership was devoted to preparing kosher tidbits for the family cats, and how they had expanded the business, just as Polsky always talked of doing, but of course on a grander scale, so that now it was an international affair. Unfortunately they would have to abandon plans for a branch on the moon. How could a good Jew mix meat and cheese? (Wiseman, 90-91)

Wiseman even uses the literary device of humour when tackling the sensitive issue of women's health in chapter fourteen, where Mrs Plopler is describing to Ruth, Abraham's daughter-in-law, her visit to her doctor for a check-up:

> "Just a general checkup," Mrs. Plopler was saying, "because I wasn't feeling good." Mrs. Plopler raised her eyebrows, expanding her nostrils. […] "So that's why he made me take off my clothes!" Mrs. Plopler expressed shock. Ruth looked at her, puzzled. "Just like that, you can believe me," Mrs. Plopler reiterated, "reaches his hand under the shirt and puts it on my breast." Mrs. Plopler showed how, clutching her unspectacular bosom. "Squeezes one, squeezes the other, pats, feels, takes his time, and all the time he's looking me right in the eye, and he says right out, not even ashamed to look at me" – Mrs. Plopler's voice was incredulous – " lumps?" I hardly knew where to look." Mrs. Plopler frowned, and her voice rose indignantly. "I wanted to say to him, 'I'll show you lumps, Doctor, I'll lump you one.' But how can you do that?"

> Mrs. Plopler's voice softened. "He's after all a doctor, almost a specialist."
>
> "Maybe" – Ruth couldn't hide her smile – "he wanted to see if you had something in your breasts, heaven forbid."
>
> Mrs. Plopler looked knowingly. […] "But I told him. I told him straight out. […] You're right, Doctor. They're not what they used to be." (Wiseman, 265-266)

12. 2. The Past

Later in The Sacrifice, this particular Jewish Family's story is revealed. Much like with the Wiens family in Wiebe's novel, Wiseman offers the reader a retrospective view of the past events that have affected Abraham's family and created the catalyst for their eventual emigration to Canada from Russia. It is almost as if there was a specific pattern in this type of immigrant literature with death in the old land as an important theme in describing the motive for leaving the native country. For Wiens in *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, the theme of death is used to show how he escapes from sins committed in the past. In Abraham's case however, the reader learns of his pain at losing two sons in the anti-Semitic pogroms in Russia and consequently, of the family's need to escape the traumatic memories connected with those affairs. That it is indeed a sensitive area for Abraham we can gather from the way in which Wiseman introduces the theme. Chaim is the person in whom Abraham confides, but as the reader finds, only very hesitantly. Chaim too is kept in suspense, and although sensing there must be tragedy somewhere in Abraham's family's background, he approaches him very prudently, waiting until Abraham himself makes the first move. In the short passage concerning the family's trauma in the old land, Chaim learns of the pogrom in the Ukrainian town where the family lived. He learns how the Jewish families are attacked by Cossack troops, egged on however by the local townspeople. Even though Wiseman narrates the tragic lynching of Abraham's sons by the local mob with great sadness, the main issue for the author seems to be not so much one of religion and death as one of despair that a previously close-knit society can become so radicalized. Relating the events as they unfolded, Abraham reminisces:

> "On their Good Friday evening the Christ dies. The church bells begin to clamour, and at a signal the cossacks come thundering into the town. The church doors burst open, and the goyim surge into the street,

> looking for Jews. Your neighbor is no longer your neighbor. A fiend has possessed him. Is this a man? No. He reveals what is inside of him, a beast.
>
> "For three nights and days the church bells ring, and for three nights and days we hide. First of all the townsfolk lead the cossacks to the grocer's. […] All night the house blazes. Those inside are trapped by their own barricade. The night is filled with screaming. It vies with the church bells for an audience in heaven." (Wiseman, 56)

Abraham then proceeds to relate to Chaim the whole chain of events during the pogrom: the burning down of the houses of the Jewish families, how a peasant family with whom he did business hid him and his family from the cossacks and looters in their cellar, and finally of their emergence into the smoke filled air of the town to see what has become of their homes. "Christ" Abraham remarks, "has been sated." Initially, Abraham is thankful that they have survived, but on the way to the town centre he meets a neighbour who, when she sees Abraham and his family, bursts into tears and runs past them without speaking:

> "She does not stop, does not answer. My wife begins to cry. My heart is suddenly heavy. As we walk towards the square we see a knot of people gathered. They are looking upward. On to long – I don't know what they were – poles, something is hanging, two bodies. Something in my heart gives a – a rip. I start to run toward the crowd. Ahh-h-h!" […] Finally Abraham sat down again. "We thought my wife had died right then, he resumed in a voice that was, for him, quiet. "The women carried her away, I remained with the men to cut down my sons. For a while this problem occupied all of my thoughts: how to get them down without hurting them. As though they could be hurt any more. They had been clever to get them up so high. I don't know what happened to Isaac. I think he ran first to his mother and then back to me, and could not find a place for himself. I know that when we brought the bodies back to the house he was beside me." (Wiseman, 57-58)

The whole passage, with its retrospective view, lends the novel a certain tone of sadness and foreboding, not however, for the Jewish community as a whole but for Abraham's family. The inference seems to be that in spite of finding a safe haven in Canada, the family has been weakened by what happened to them in the past. Abraham's wife especially, is portrayed as a quiet, suffering mother who has lost two sons and been traumatized in the process

There is no idealism in the way that Abraham views his fellow believers. Fleeing the Ukraine, Abraham and his family meet with people along the way who help them,

albeit at a price. Abraham relates how they stole across the border to Poland: "We were met at the border by Polish Jews who helped us to escape – helped us! Pious Jews with long sideburns and black frocks – they made a living of it. Big business. They stole the very stockings from the legs of my wife. Everything they song they took." (Wiseman, 69)

That anti-Jewish pogroms were a reality, has been clearly documented by many historians and writers. In *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* by John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza Klier, Klier explains that the word "pogrom" was, "inextricably linked to anti-Semitic violence after the outbreak of three great waves of anti-Jewish rioting in the Russian Empire in 1881-2, 1903-6, and 1919-21." (13) All of the pogroms seem to have a been conducted along similar lines and, as Klier himself asserts, were either planned, welcomed or at least tolerated by the Russian government at that time or since to suit its own purposes. What was different between the various pogroms was the way in which they were reported. Klier quotes a contemporary account of the so-called Odessa pogrom of 1859 which appeared in an edition of *Odesskii vestnik* of the time:

> The author [Klier writes] noted that the holiday season was especially conducive to orgies and recklessness while the religious aura provided a convenient pretext for the appearance of religious tolerance fanaticism among the lower classes. To these circumstances were added the large number of foreign sailors in the city. Holy week had begun, the paper reported, with quarreling, between Jewish and Christian children, which escalated into a riot when foreign soldiers intervened and began to vandalize the Jewish quarter. […] Later in the week street urchins and drunken Russian workers attempted to revive the violence, but vigorous police measures restricted the damage to some broken glass. (Klier, 18)

Klier contrasts this piece of journalism with that of another contemporary account of that same event in *Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti* where the tone of reporting is altogether more rabid:

> Foremost among the neglected causes [Klier explains] was the hatred elicited by the Jews' economic domination of the region. The Jews were a "co-operative of kulaks [rural explorers]," sucking the vital juices from the population. "One can say without much exaggeration that where the Jews have the mass of the population in their hands, they are able to build a many-sided instrument for their exploitation and the people there every minute feel themselves under an unbearable yoke, with which the serfdom of the past cannot even compare." (Klier, 31)

Wiseman's description of the pogrom through the mouthpiece of Abraham is an almost carbon copy of those described in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*. Indeed it is very hard for someone reading *The Sacrifice* to ascertain the exact time of the setting. It almost seems that Wiseman is pointing out that, in the end, when it happened is not as important as what actually happened. Peter Kenez, in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*, points out that:

> The beginning of anti-Semitic agitation cannot be dated, for the Ukraine had not been without it for centuries. During 1918, however, when the country was occupied by the Germans and the Austrians, agitation accelerated. The occupying authorities contributed to anti-Semitism by their proclamations, which singled out the Jews. These proclamations attacked the Jews for black marketeering and for the spread of anti-German rumors. (Klier, 294)

The Sacrifice and *Peace Shall Destroy Many* are both primarily novels about the survival of a minority in a hostile or unfamiliar environment. Wiseman's novel however describes a minority more willing to meet their saviours – the Canadians – halfway, willing to make compromises in order to achieve their goal of integration. In contrast to the protagonists in Wiebe's novel, those in *The Sacrifice* seem more capable of freeing themselves from religious contentions and are even, as in Abraham's case, capable of question their own faith in God. This is evident in Abraham's reaction to the lynching of his sons, when he remarks, "Of this too I accuse Him. How He must despise us, to take my sons and let these grow to make us hated by all the world, to make us even hate ourselves." (70) Even the older generation are able to question the religious implications of contemporary events. Later on in the novel, after Abraham loses his wife and his one remaining son, Isaac, he, Hymie and Chaim philosophize on the impending war in Europe:

> "There will be a war," said Chaim. He shivered under the blast of cold air that had followed Hymie into the shop. He did not want to leave the shop just yet, to head into the cold wind, but it was so hard to find things to say. "A terrible war. They won't be allowed to go on tormenting us. The world won't let them. The people will rise up."
>
> "There'll be a war all right," said Hymie,rubbing his hands and blowing on them as he emerged from the kitchen. "But not because anybody gives a damn about us." There was authority in Hymie's voice. […]
>
> "God will help us," said Chaim.

> Hymie laughed patronizingly. "Yeah." He went into the delicatessen, glanced at the empty booths, and moved towards the kibitzarnia. Chaim watched him with an expression of distaste on his face.
>
> "It is said" – Abraham spoke suddenly – that "thousands are being murdered."
>
> "Thousands? Millions," said Chaim. "They say that they want to wipe out all the Jews in the world." Chaim snorted. "Can you imagine that?"
>
> "Where is God, then, Chaim?"
>
> Chaim's eyes rolled instinctively upward.
>
> "Where is God when all this is going on?" Abraham repeated.
>
> "God knows," said Chaim. "He knows what He's doing."
>
> "Is He doing it, then?" Abraham persisted.
>
> "Ah, well, no I wouldn't say He was doing it himself." Chaim squirmed on his honorary barrel. "It's being done, it's true, by our enemies, by His enemies. […] But there is action. They are making campaigns for other countries to let in the refugees, to save their lives."
>
> "But they don't want to," said Abraham slowly. (Wiseman, 232-233)

This wonderfully delicate dialogue concerning the pros and cons of the hand of God on worldly matters ends with Abraham proclaiming, "It's not," [he said], "that I don't believe. I made the mistake once of throwing myself about like a wild man. […] But does He believe? And then I think, but He knows. He doesn't have to believe. And then I ask myself, what is it that He knows?" (233)

12. 3. A Cautious Relationship

In the above dialogue, where Abraham is rather cynical as to the validity of Chaim's statement concerning other countries' willingness to grant persecuted Jews immigration rights, Wiseman also touches on a very sensitive subject regarding Canada's past. There are definite allusions here to the fact that Canada, at the time of the impending Second World War in Europe, was reluctant to admit an increasing number of Jewish refugees fleeing persecution. There are many references to this issue in studies concerning anti-Semitism. In *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation,* Alan T. Davies writes that:

> The Executive Committee of the Council for Social Service of the Anglican Church deplored the public indifference to the [Jewish] refugee crisis. 1940, the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec passed a more extensive resolution, urging the Canadian government to receive the victims of the Nazi terror. A few church leaders, determined to stir the Christian conscience, implored Canadians to accept responsibility for the refugees, and to demand their admission to Canada en masse. Yet despite these resolutions and motions urging the Canadian government to participate in refugee relief, […] Canada was second on the list of countries offering the least aid to Nazi refugees; first was Soviet Russia, a country that ideologically repudiated Christianity. […] Some Canadian Christians were not proud of this record […] Emphasizing that millions of human beings were being tortured to death in Nazi camps, one United Christian writer implored the nation to save these victims before they were totally destroyed. (Davies, 207)

There is however, very little reference to actual anti-Semitism throughout the novel. In fact even the first real references to "Gentiles" in opposition to Jews, come much later on in the story, almost as if Wiseman were relating the story in parallel to the historic reality of Jewish life in Canada, and pointing more towards Jewish and Gentile integration than separation. It is indeed not until the last third of the novel that the author has inserted any typical Anglo-Saxon names into the list of characters. Wiseman could be referring to the gradual success of the Jewish community in integrating with Canadians. In the story the author seems to be using a group of children of diverse background as a motif to represent the theme of integration in an almost biblical parody. The scene describes how a group of children: Abraham's grandson, Moses; Dmitri, the tough guy of the group; his sister Junie – Junie Jew-lover as her brother calls her; Tony, and Donald Gregory Mc Neil, are returning home from school. They decide to go and play in the pit where the old synagogue had stood. The game is bows and arrows:

> "Sitting!" commanded Dmitri.
>
> "Sitting," they assented.
>
> The boys unbuttoned their flies. Donald Gregory zipped his neatly but cautiously open. Dmitri, two buttons missing, gave a dexterous wriggle without using his hands. Blue-eyed Tony grinned at Junie, who stood watching around the curve of the pit, and pretended to take aim at her. Moses watched them without moving happy, waiting for a sign.
>
> "I bet I can pee farther than any of you," he said suddenly, boldly.
>
> "Oh, yeah!" Dmitri sneered.

> "Yeah" – Moses, bold, confident of his sign. He undid his fly.
>
> "See" – proudly – "mine's different."
>
> The boys crowded round. Junie couldn't see from where she stood. She came closer. "Is it bigger?"
>
> "Nah." Dmitri snorted contemptuously. "It hasn't got a frill. […]
>
> Moses and Dmitri were still arguing [as to who had urinated further] although the sun was already drying the evidence.
>
> "You know yourself that mine went farther," said Moses indignantly, feeling, for the moment, no fear of the brawny Dmitri.
>
> "Whaddaya mean, ya liar!" Dmitri clambered out of the pit and noticed Junie, who was standing with her legs crossed. "Ha! Look at that dame! She can only pee downwards."
>
> Mortified, Junie stared at her brother. Suddenly she turned and began to run out of the empty lot. When she had safely crossed the street she whirled and yelled with all her might, Moses peed farther! Moses peed farther!" Then she ran. (Wiseman, 205-206)

In another example of integration between Jews and Gentiles, Laiah, a Jewess with a rather Bohemian lifestyle, becomes acquainted with a young Gentile woman, Jenny, who takes up rooms in the same apartment block. The two woman get on extremely well, in spite of their vast age difference, with Laiah offering Jenny snippets of advice concerning, especially, matrimonial affairs. In one episode, Abraham, Laiah and Jenny all meet in Laiah's apartment and the ensuing conversation is an eclectic mix of opinions concerning the occult, Jewish religion and Laiah's rather irreverent views on some of the personalities of the Jewish community. Jenny herself is transfixed by the relationship between the Father Christmas-like figure of Abraham – introduced to her as a butcher – and the exotic figure of Laiah:

> Jenny busied herself in the kitchen. In her heart she positively thrilled with the strangeness of this exotic Jewess who was her friend. They did things differently. Here was this bearded old man. What could she call him? Distinguished. He certainly didn't look like a butcher. Could it merely have been a code word? Jenny felt the parcel on the table. It could be meat.
>
> Ever since she had moved into this district, into the attic room across the hall, and had made the acquaintance of Laiah because they shared the same toilet on the landing, she had really learned; it had been an education. At first she had been just a little wary of this woman with her peculiar accent. But Laiah had been so friendly and really so interesting. (Wiseman, 239)

12. 4. Generation Clash

As is witnessed in the above passage, Wiseman explores, as does indeed Wiebe in his novel, the theme of the generation clash. The author in *The Sacrifice* is however not so much preoccupied with the differing views on religion between the generations as with care for the elderly. With a sense of humour typical throughout the novel Wiseman describes the scene where the – at this stage of the novel – elderly protagonists, Abraham and Polsky are playing cards. Polsky is contemplating what will become of him in his old age:

> In a way he felt a certain kinship with Abraham. He himself was no old man yet, but a man in his fifties is no longer a youngster either. Someday the time would come for him too.. But he would be smart about it. There are ways an old dog can make sure of having his warm bed to die in, even when he's useless. And there are ways of keeping your sons clucking love all over you. Polsky triumphantly collected the cards. Just keep the property in your name, and they'll love every senile part of you. (Wiseman, 236)

In the later part of her novel, Wiseman actually combines two recurring themes: the generation clash and female emancipation. Abraham's wife has died, as has his son, leaving just him, his daughter-in-law Ruth and his grandson Moses. It is obvious throughout the novel that Abraham dotes on his grandson, probably as a result of all the trials and tribulations of the family's past. Towards the climax of the novel, three of the main protagonists seem to be confiding in each other more often. Abraham is concerned for the future of his grandson, considering himself to be responsible for his correct upbringing. Laiah on the other hand seems to be tactfully reminding Abraham of the fact that his daughter-in-law is still a young and attractive woman with plans for her own future and that of her son. And finally Chaim, is primarily concerned with what will happen to him and his wife Bassieh in their declining years. Chaim's wife would prefer it if their son Ralph let them have a room in his house, but as Chaim muses, "And he doesn't want us. And I don't want it either. Why should I sit at the bottom of his table, when for my few remaining years I can still sit at the head of my own? But no. What will happen is that she will convince Ralph that I am getting a little childish, and that the suite and me are too much for her to take care of." (257) Abraham however has always seen his own son as someone from whom he can learn something new. Wiseman offers similar contrasts throughout the novel, contrasts between the traditional ways of the Jewish community and those of their adopted land, the necessity

of adapting these ways for survival in the new land, and the changing way in which the young of the Jewish community view their own future. Abraham explains this to Laiah in one of their increasingly frequent conversations:

> "[H]ow often it used to happen that my Isaac used to teach me things. He would uproot an old idea and plant in its stead a fresh new thought that would grow in my mind until I knew that this was a truth. I would show it to my friends and say 'Here, here is an example that the young can teach the old.' I myself am a man who has looked always to the new, who is always willing to learn." (Wiseman, 258)

In spite of his professed tolerance, Abraham is genuinely shocked when he realises that his daughter-in-law Ruth has been making her own plans for herself, her son and his grandfather. Ruth has decided to open a store a few streets away where they have all been living for several years. This means that Abraham's set routine will be disrupted, but even more worrying for him is the fact that Moses will have to change schools, dealing a severe blow to Abraham's plans for his grandson's future. Another fear for Abraham is that he will lose his grandson to another man as he mistakenly understands that Harry, a businessman who is helping Ruth out purely professionally, is in an emotional relationship with her. In the ensuing conversation with Laiah, the latter asks teasingly:

> "Didn't I tell you she would fall on her feet? You don't really have to worry about her. She can take care of herself. Nowadays the women aren't what they used to be in the old country. They like to go their own way. They don't like to be interfered with. And they get what they want."
>
> "I don't know," said Abraham. "It's all so quick. Why is he in such a rush? Why is he just like that so good to her? He is letting her have so much credit. There was a time once when I would have thought it was a natural thing for one man to hold out his hand to another. Now I wonder. I ask myself, is there something behind it? […] Ruth goes ahead, and I must stand on the side and watch." (Wiseman, 271)

Laiah herself seems to have designs on Abraham. Both are, in effect, single and Laiah seems to sense that if the two of them join forces, life will be much easier for both of them. From her musings the reader gets the impression that Laiah is thinking first of all of herself but also contemplating including Abraham in her plans, pointing out to him that he should be taking care of himself. Wiseman maps out Laiah's adult life, from a young woman having a myriad of affairs with men, right up to this moment when she seems to realise that it is maybe time to settle down with a steady partner.

Certain elements of eroticism are introduced into the novel. Abraham, for example, when asking himself how it was that, in spite of viewing Laiah quite critically, he found himself eating at her table. “The question bothered him still even after he had left her. Her large, loose body with the low-cut bodice of her housecoat, from which he had to persistently avert his eyes, rustled indecently through the passages of his mind.” (262)

13. Tragedy in *The Sacrifice*

Abraham's conversations with Laiah, and his inner thoughts are portrayed as being increasingly chaotic, resembling the ramblings of a madman. Whereas Laiah is pragmatically putting her case for both of them building up a closer relationship, Abraham seems to be seeking for answers to all his questions in religion. In one dialogue with his daughter-in-law, when Abraham says, "I could swear by God, by the Almighty." Ruth retorts, "You and God together are always thinking. Whatever is convenient for you God happens to think. Where do you keep Him, this God of yours, in your coat pocket?" (288). It appears that Wiseman is setting the scene for the climax of the novel, and in this respect there are direct similarities to the climax of Wiebe's novel. In the final stages, both novels deal with issues of religion and sexuality. Wiebe's novel uses the theme of naivety of one of the protagonists in matters of sexuality, Thom, to portray the dramatic social changes in Mennonite society. Similarly Wiseman appears to be looking for some method of personifying not so much the changes in society as the sense of hopelessness that Abraham feels towards the end of his life. In a community which, as the author herself describes, is relatively bereft of social tension, and primarily preoccupied with day-to-day issues of survival, Abraham seems to be a drowning man in a sea of humanity. Inexplicably Abraham, in his confusion, murders Laiah, and nobody can understand why. At the investigation, Abraham's ramblings make no sense to his questioners:

> "That I have taken life" – Abraham swayed – "that I have killed my sons, that I have made myself equal with my enemies, that it was in me, womb of death, festering in no one else. Who was I? Who was I to demand, to threaten, when it was there in my arms, breathing, alive. But no. It was in me. I was not content to be, as He willed it. I wanted more. I had to be creator and destroyer. Why did I weep, then, when I saw them hanging, swaying at the will of the wind? Why did I tear my hair when he lay there?" (Wiseman, 326)

At this point in her novel, Wiseman seems to abandon, for a while at least, her hitherto straightforward approach to relating the story. The Jewish community is in complete shock with regards to Abraham's crime, and everyone is looking for excuses as to why such a thing should happen in their community. For once even the reader is at a loss to understand the events: has Abraham simply gone insane, or is there some reason behind his madness? For a while there is utter chaos among those of the community with everybody seeming to attempt to distance themselves from Abraham's

actions. As a tool for unravelling the string of events and for judging opinions, Wiseman chooses the environment of the synagogue. Here, for the first time in days after the tragic events, Chaim finds comfort, "drawing his prayer shawl out of its pouch and unfolding it, making ready to draw its protective folds about him." (310) But comfort seems to be the last thing afforded to Chaim. The elders of the synagogue are on the offensive, criticizing Chaim for his close friendship with Abraham, with Dreiman accusing him, "Wasn't it always 'Avrom [Abraham] this' and 'my friend Avrom that'?" (313) Initially, Chaim is critical of Abraham, agreeing with the others that Abraham's madness seems to have been the prime cause of their suffering. Indeed the keyword here seems to be "madness", almost as if it were a comforting thought for those caught up in the tragic events. Eventually however, the author reverts to her earlier down-to-earth approach when reporting the ensuing dialogues. Dreiman in particular being sarcastic, remarking that, "He [Abraham] had to go and show them that we can have murderers too, just like them." (314) It is almost as if Wiseman is pointing out that finally the Jewish community has merged with Canadian society as a whole – complete with crime and murder. And when, once again the excuse of madness comes up, Dreiman turns to the speaker, arguing, "So if he was mad why didn't he go bang his own head against the wall?" (315) But towards the end of the discourse in the synagogue Chaim becomes slightly more defensive as he listens to the participants belittling Abraham, in spite of their scarcely knowing him. He suddenly realises that he does not feel exactly as he expected he should feel, and cannot explain how he feels:

> "Who knows?" Summoning courage, Chaim began. "Who knows? Even the papers don't know. He was not such a man – What he did – Madness, a madness of grief. He was such a man who couldn't stand, couldn't bear – It is a hard thing to explain, but a man like that – he could be pressed in, pressed in, but there was such a longing in him. You say just a butcher, but he was not, not like some others. He was not like me, afraid, treading the safe middle path. In his mind he was not afraid to climb, to soar, to walk the edge of the ravine. I would have liked to be such a one sometimes. But when such a man falls –" (Wiseman, 315)

Thus the theme, towards the end of Wiseman's novel, becomes one of forgiveness. This theme is evident not only in the passage dealing with Chaim's defence of Abraham, but also in the passage concerning the relationship between Abraham and his grandson, Moses. Wiseman in fact, interlocks both ideas deftly in the final passage where Moses is introduced to Chaim's grandson, Aaron, just as Moses is contemplating paying a visit to his grandfather in the asylum for the first time since the murder. Both boys, after an

initial, tentative ice-breaking, find they have something in common. Moses, aware of the social stigma of his grandfather's crime, mentions this fact, but Aaron remaining nonplussed, remarks that there are more ways than one to kill. "My old man," said Aaron, throwing it out, "has been slowly killing my mother for years." He continues, explaining that, "He sleeps with other dames [...] and she knows it too. Maybe it's not the same as taking a knife, but it's cleaner to take a knife. […] Sometimes I feel like doing it myself."(338) The novel ends with Moses finally visiting his grandfather during Yom Kippur. Although evidently a scene of forgiveness and touching as it is, the fact is not explicitly inferred, as witnessed by Moses' thoughts as he returns by bus from the asylum upon the hill:

> Even afterward, as he sat in the bus that rattled its way down towards the city, with his hand shielding his swollen eyes from the possibly curious glances of the other passengers, he could not understand exactly what had come together for him. Nothing had happened really. He had not wrenched from the past a confession or a cry for forgiveness; he had not won an exoneration or wreaked some petty revenge. He did not even know concretely, in any way that he could explain to himself as yet, any more than he had known. And yet he knew that he was a different person from the boy who had gone up the hill. (Wiseman, 345)

14. Conclusions

Both *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and *The Sacrifice* tackle the same principal issue: that of immigrant life in Canada from the end of the nineteenth century up to the Second World War. Both novels also offer insights into the lives of their protagonists in their original homelands. However, this seems to be where any similarities end, as in Wiebe's novel the past hides a guilty secret which we learn more of later on in the story. Throughout *Peace Shall Destroy Many* the author's primary task seems to be that of outlining the transfer of an unbending faith and way of life from one environment in the old homeland to a new one in a new country. Wiebe subsequently devotes a great deal of space to the ensuing arguments as to how or, indeed if, the Mennonite faith should change. In some stages the novel becomes almost a parallel to Mennonite practice of the past, where members of that religion expended a disproportionate amount of effort in arguing correct interpretations of religious directives and biblical quotations. In *Refractions of Germany in Canadian Literature and Culture*, author, Heinz Antor, speaks of this "spiritual stuborness", quoting the accomplished sixteenth century Mennonite engineer, Adam Wybe, who remonstrated that:

> We ourselves have learned to make the immense teachings of Jesus into small, sharp knives to slice ourselves apart. If someone does not agree with us, we hit them with our Scriptures. You, we say, you are now banned from the believers, you must now be shunned! Then we cannot eat with you or even speak – for what reason? With every theological debate the list of little reasons grows longer. (Antor, 137)

Throughout the whole novel, dialogues concerning personal or official views on various aspects of religious life abound. Wiseman, on the other hand, is much less preoccupied with such religious nuances within the dialogues of her protagonists. Religion in *The Sacrifice* is indeed an aspect which remains very much in the background. Subsequently, the dialogues in the novel are much richer, not only in content, but also in tone. Whereas Wiebe's dialogues are rarely other than serious, factual statements with pointed religious references, Wiseman's are quite the opposite: vibrant, authentic-sounding dialogues using colloquial speech. The use of humour within the dialogues also abounds, as do aspects of satire and sarcasm. The protagonists often take a self-depreciating approach when commenting on community affairs and their part in them.

Both novels are likewise diverse in their respective authors' approach to their final passages. For Wiebe's protagonists the relatively harmless passage, where Razia's sexual innuendo provokes scenes of lust, jealousy and naivety, takes on connotations of immense tragedy. A tragedy, which however exaggerated, is one which Wiebe is quite clearly pointing out will eventually divide the community forever. It is as if the author were trying point out that although this is just part of everyday life for the average Canadian, for the Mennonites being tugged in one direction by their elders and in another direction by society, this was a confusing dilemma which had to be finally faced however challenging. The climax to Wiseman's novel could be viewed as a tragedy of a much greater magnitude as it concerns death and murder. It is however primarily a tragedy for the few people who are in some way or another connected with Abraham – the perpetrator of the crime. The Jewish community also view the events concerning Abraham as a tragedy, but one which affects not so much the existence of that community as its integration into Canadian society. This seems to be quite clear from the conversation at the synagogue where the elders are discussing Abraham's crime when Dreiman complains, "… Does he have to drag the rest of us with him through the mouths of the whole country?" (316)

Any attempt at interpreting historical events with the help of works of fiction will inevitably lead to misinterpretations, generalizations and inaccuracies. This is something Gerald Tulchinsky addresses in his detailed work, *Canada's Jews: a people's journey*. Tulchinsky draws the reader's attention to the prevailing myths in the popular perception of Canadian Jewish history. He cites this (in his opinion) overly rose-tinted view of the manner in which:

> [T]hey [Jews] adapted themselves readily to the new environment and became one of Canada's great success stories; they moved quickly up the social and economic ladders and established a well-organized communal life marked by cohesion and self-help, except for minor divisions between the later and earlier arrivals. And so on. The trouble with myths is that they usually contain a certain amount of truth, and the difficulty lies in distinguishing between the times and places when they are and are not true. (Tulchinsky, 5)

Evidently, this could be applied to Wiseman's *The sacrifice* where, as mentioned elsewhere in this work, the general view is one of a community at pains to be seen as a self-sufficient, hard-working one. Tulchinsky himself bolsters this theory when,

speaking of early Canadian Jewish history, he goes into great detail in plotting the careers of prominent Jews. He describes the new economic opportunities in Montreal and cites the example of one David David in Montreal, who:

> [W]as perhaps the major Jewish participant in this transforming economy. Starting off as a 'winterer' in the northwest fur trade, he linked up with the North West Company and was admitted in 1817 to Montreal's prestigious Beaver Club. […] From 1818 to 1884, he served as a founding director of the Bank of Montreal and acted as one of the promoters of a company to build a canal between Montreal's port and Lachine to improve communications with Upper Canada. (Tulchinsky, 29)

However, Tulchinsky also points out the less savoury aspect of the story when describing the situation in the heavier populated urban areas of Canada, almost a century later, when "Jews lived close to Ukrainians, Poles, and Germans." He continues, "But soon old animosities re-emerged: Ukrainians, to many Jews, were murderous, drunken barbarians, while Jews, to many Ukrainians, were Christ-killers, unmanly weaklings, and ruthless exploiters." (114)

The one defining feature for each novel could probably be put down to their respective narrative moods. Wiebe's serious, almost devout tone seems to capture the attitude of the Mennonite community of the period. With numerous theological dialogues and stark descriptions of the back-braking toil on the Mennonite farms *Peace Shall Destroy Many* creates a believable representation of that minority's lifestyle. Wiseman's tone is an altogether lighter one, concentrating on everyday events, light-hearted banter and emphasizing elements of humour. Darker aspects of the community seem to be played down almost as if the author was trying to state that yes, there were problems, but these outweighed the advantages of surviving in an environment infinitely safer than that of the past.

Both novels provide a rare picture of immigrant communities and their role in settling Canada. In spite of being primarily works of fiction, when compared to literary sources dealing with historical events concerning both the Mennonite and Jewish Mennonite communities, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and *The Sacrifice* provide a relatively authentic picture of immigrant life. Both novels help to put present-day issues relating to minorities in Canada into perspective. That similar literature is generally overshadowed by literature pertaining to issues of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant

immigration, does not necessarily mean that the former is of lesser importance. Indeed, as this work proves, much has been written on this subject and today's digital media can also take on a much greater role in spreading information on Canada's complex literary heritage.

Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá problémy života imigrantů do Kanady počátkem dvacátého století a jejich popisem v literatuře v angličtině. Diplomová práce se soustřeďuje na komunity mennonitů a židů a jak se zobrazují v románech dvou kanadských autorů – v románu Rudyho Wiebe – *Peace Shall Destroy Many* a v románu Adely Wisemanové – *The Sacrifice*.

Práce je inspirována všeobecnou tendencí zapomínat na vliv různých národnostních a náboženských menšin na osídlování Kanady a tudíž i na literaturu popisující tento vliv.

Po úvodní kapitole následuje kapitola, která se zabývá metodologickým postupem. Je zde nastíněna struktura diplomové práce a také se zde uvádí, na které aspekty daného problému se zaměřuje. Dále se zde vysvětluje, z kterých primárních a sekundárních literárních zdrojů se čerpá.

V první části třetí kapitoly, která se zabývá popisem imigrantského života v Kanadě, v literárních dílech, popisuje v díle *Roughing it in the Bush*, spisovatelka Susanna Moodie, radosti a slasti života anglosaského přistěhovalce do Kanady v první polovině devatenáctého století. Moodie zde porovnává romantický pohled čerstvého emigranta z britských ostrovů se skutečnou realitou v Kanadě. Další podkapitola se zabývá anglosaským šovinistickým tónem typickým pro podobnou literaturu počátkem dvacátého století. Hlavním literárním zdrojem v této podkapitole je román Ralpha Conner, *The Foreigner: a tale of the Saskatchewan.* Román se zabývá přeměnou malé osady na kanadském západě na velkoměsto, dnes známé jako Winnipeg. Tato část práce zdůrazňuje způsob, jakým se Conner dívá svrchu na ostatní národy – povětšinou slovanského původu. Také se zde poukazuje na jeho obsese s anglikánskou protestantskou vírou a zabývá se pohledem dřívějších usedlíků na nově přicházející usedlíky. Jako sekundární zdroje zde slouží díla od kanadských autorů J. H. McCulloch a W. H. Jarvis. Poslední podkapitola v této části naznačuje, jak rozmanití evropští přistěhovalci ve skutečnosti byli. Cituje se zde kanadský autor Eric Thomson, který zdůrazňuje nutnost zabývat se literaturou jiných etnik v Kanadě ve vztahu k přistěhovalství. Také se zde dokazuje existence literatury zabývající se touto

problematikou, ale zároveň uznává, že taková literatura se bohužel netěší velké popularitě.

Čtvrtá kapitola popisuje vznik a vývoj náboženské menšiny mennonitů. Mapuje její počátky v šestnáctém století, tehdy ještě jako anabaptisté. Pojmenovaní získali potom pod vedením Menno Simonse a působili hlavně v severní Evropě. Vzhledem k neustálým pronásledováním, mennonité byli nuceni stále hledat nové útočiště, například ve Švýcarsku, Polsku, Rusku a nakonec také v Severní Americe. Posledně jmenované útočiště je samozřejmě klíčové pro tuto práci. To, že byli nejen silně věřící, ale navíc propagovali pacifismus, stali se terčem těch, kteří je podezřívali ze zbabělství, nebo z neoddanosti zemím, kde zrovna pobývali, názor který podporuje literární kritik J. L. Granatstein v *The American History Review*. Ve čtvrté kapitole se proto zkoumá, jak autor Rudy Wiebe přistupuje k otázce antimilitarismu v románu *Peace Shall Destroy Many*. V době druhé světové války mennonitská komunita řeší dilema: přidat se k ostatním Kanaďanům fyzicky proti německé agresi, nebo trvat na svém antimilitarismu. Dále se v této kapitole zabývá jazykem mennonitů, což je další problém, který Wiebe popisuje v jeho románu. Jak se zde dokazuje ze sekundárních zdrojů, mennonité hovořili původně německým jazykem, ale tento jazyk měl různé podoby dle toho, odkud mennonité pocházeli. Ve Wiebeho románu dochází ke střetu tohoto původního jazyka, který zřejmě symbolizuje tradice, s angličtinou, která symbolizuje klíč k integraci.

Pátá kapitola se soustřeďuje na to, jak ostatní Kanaďané pohlíží na mennonité v románu Rudyho Wiebe. V počátcích osídlování Kanady se, dle sekundárních zdrojů, dívalo na mennonity s určitým respektem, stejné zdroje dokazují, že tento pohled se radikálně změnil již za první světové války, na averzi. Wiebe popisuje, jak se tato averze stupňuje během druhé světové války. V této části práce se také zkoumá styl Wiebeho psaní – časté užití symbolů a biblických metafor – ale také jeho detailní popisy kanadského venkova a tvrdé zemědělské práce.

V šesté kapitole se zkoumá, jakým způsobem Wiebe naznačuje, že nutně přijdou obrovské změny v kanadské společnosti, změny které ovlivní budoucí vývoj mennonitské komunity po skončení války. Cituje se zde i autora T. D. Regehra, který ve své díle, *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970*, zdůrazňuje, že ač mennonité již přežili

dvacátá a třicátá léta dvacátého století, že je čekají mnohem větší změny, které ukončí jejich dosavadní izolaci od kanadské společnosti.

Sedmá kapitola se zabývá různými jevy, tykajícími se mennonitů, jako sociálního celku. Zkoumá se zde, jakým způsobem Wiebe popisuje roli žen v komunitě. Tři ženy v románu: Elizabeth, dcera autokratického pastora Blocka, Thomova matka, paní Wiensová, a nová učitelka Razia Tantamontová, symbolizují, zdá se, různé negativní jevy v mennonitské komunitě. V této kapitole se pak sleduje, jak Wiebe spojí úděly těchto žen, aby z téměř didaktického dokumentu doby vytvořil román s vyvrcholením. Ústřední postavou druhé části románu se stává Elizabeth, která má evidentně symbolizovat přísná náboženská pravidla, rasismus a intoleranci v mennonitské společnosti a vliv těchto jevů na smrt této mladé ženy.

Poslední kapitola zabývající se Wiebeho románem zkoumá symboliku postavy nové učitelky Razii a jak autor tuto postavu zdánlivě používá sugestivně jako symbol nové doby, v přímém kontrastu s postavou Elizabeth. Posledně jmenovaná žena působí zde jako šedá, nenápadná postava, zlomena tíhou neohebných náboženských pravidel. Razia si naopak uvědomuje svou sexualitu a má touhu užít si více než pouhou dřinu a nudu na venkově. Wiebe tyto rozpory mistrně kombinuje ve scénce s vánoční besídkou v komunitě, kde veškeré dosavadní tradiční hodnoty mennonitů jsou rázem porušeny.

Otázky židovských přistěhovalců do Kanady jsou nastíněny v deváté kapitole, nejdříve ve spojení s komunitou mennonitů. Poukazuje se zde opět na netoleranci mennonitů k ostatním vírám. Všímá si však i vztahu ostatních Kanaďanů se židy a projevy antisemitismu, obzvláště v době nástupu fašizmu v Německu. Uvádí se zde také druhý román, který je součástí práce – *The Sacrifice* od Adele Wisemanové. Román vypráví příběh židovské rodiny, Abrahama a jeho ženy Sarah a jejich syna Isaaca, která se přistěhuje do Kanady.

Další kapitola si všímá jak Wisemanová popisuje prostředí, do kterého se rodina přestěhuje ve srovnání se způsobem jakým Wiebe popisuje prostředí ve svém románu. Dokazuje se zde, že nejvýznamnějším rozdílem je, že Wiebeho román se odehrává v zemědělské komunitě na venkovu, román Adele Wisemanové se odehrává téměř výlučně v městském prostředí. Sekundární literatura potvrdí skutečnost, že židovská imigrantská komunita v Kanadě byla skutečně převážně soustředěna do měst. Další rozdíl mezi romány jsou dialogy mezi protagonisty, tyto dialogy se porovnávají

v jedenácté kapitole a zkoumá se, v čem se liší. V případě Wisemanové, mají dialogy mnohem lehčí tón a nezabývají se tolik otázkami teologie jako v případě Wiebeho románu. Je zde dále naznačena schopnost židů smát se sami sobě a, i v případě náboženských otázek, být kritický.

Otázky konfliktu ve společnosti mezi židy a Kanaďany a jak jsou popsané v románu *The Sacrifice* jsou prozkoumané ve dvanácté kapitole. Porovnává se zde například, způsob jakým Wiebe a Wisemanová popisují roli žen v obou komunitách. Je zcela pochopitelné, že Wisemanová, jako žena, si tohoto tématu všímá více než Wiebe, ale je zřejmé z přiložených pasáží, že se ženy v židovské komunitě těšily většímu respektu než ženy v komunitě mennonitské v době popsané v obou románech. V souvislosti s konfliktem ve společnosti se židy, Wisemanová se vrací do minulosti Abrahamovy rodiny na Ukrajině. Za tím účelem Wisemanová střídá vyprávění o dramatických zkušenostech rodiny na starém kontinentě a vyprávění o mnohem klidnějších zkušenostech v nové zemi. Autorka kritickým způsobem popisuje hrůzy pogromů vůči židům na Ukrajině, ale zároveň se zdá, že implicitně kritizuje, slovy Abrahama, selektivní imigrantskou politiku Kanadských úřadů vůči židovským přistěhovalcům po události v Německu před a během druhé světové války.

Generační střet je také tématem pro oba autory. V případě Wiebeho románu se jedná spíše o střet liberálnějších náboženských názorů mladých mennonitů s více konzervativními názory starších mennonitů. Wisemanová si naopak všímá otázek soužití mladší se starší generací a využívá přitom někdy, typicky pro ní, prvky židovského humoru.

Poslední kapitola zabývající se románem Adely Wisemanové, se soustřeďuje na interpretaci tragédií, ke které dojde v závěru tohoto dílo. Abraham, již jako stařec zavraždí židovku Laiah, která je v románu popsaná jako žena soběstačná s liberálním pohledem na svět. V případě tragédie na konci Wiebeho románu se jedná o tragédii pro budoucí existenci mennonitů jako komunity – zbořily se tradiční hodnoty a protagonisté cítí blížící se katastrofu v podobě velkých společenských změn. Abrahamova tragédie v románu *The Sacrifice* je však skutečnou tragedií, došlo k vraždě ženy a nikdo nechápe, proč k tomu došlo. Právě v třinácté kapitole se zkoumá, zdali Wisemanová naznačuje, že vraždou v židovské komunitě se tato komunita stává součásti kanadské společností jako takové.

Závěr diplomové práce konstatuje, že obě díla, Wisemanové a Wiebeho, mají společného pouze to, že popisují život přistěhovalců z Evropy do Kanady. Způsob vyprávění je naprosto odlišný u obou děl, tak jakým způsobem se prostředí jednotlivých románů popisuje a konečně také charakter koexistence s Kanaďany anglosaského původu se liší u obou etnik. V porovnání se sekundární literaturou dokumentující prostředí obou komunit se však zdá, že autoři věrně zachytili náladu a charakter doby, ať již se jedná o boj mennonitů s moderními trendy v Kanadské společnosti v druhé polovině dvacátého století, nebo snaha židů začlenit se do této společnosti.

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