

From Whom is the Voice Coming? Mennonites, First Nations People and Appropriation of Voice

Jonathan Dueck, *University of Alberta*

Introduction

I will begin with a selection of quotations in order to highlight a literary discourse of collaboration and a parallel discourse in music. The first two quotations appear at the beginning of the autobiography of the Cree woman, Yvonne Johnson, *Stolen Life: the Journey of a Cree Woman*, co-authored by Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson:

This book is based on what Yvonne Johnson holds to be her own truths about the life she has lived. However, since there is never only one way to tell a story, other persons involved may well have experienced and remember differently the event and actions here portrayed. This book is also based on my research into the circumstances of Yvonne's life. (Wiebe in Wiebe and Johnson, xi)

O Creator of all, I pray you, look at me, for I am weak and pitiful. I pray, help me to make amends to all those I have harmed; grant them love and peace, so that they may understand I am sorry; help me to share my shame and pain, so that others will do the same, and so awaken to themselves and to all the peoples of the world. Hai hai. (Johnson in Wiebe and Johnson, xiii)

The next two quotations are from white woman Rebecca Slough's introduction to the Mennonite hymnal entitled *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, and the full text of Cheyenne man Harvey Whiteshield's hymn "Ehane he'ama (Father God, you are holy)" which appears in this hymnal.

The creative activity of the Holy Spirit through music has nurtured our life of faith. Our singing has been shaped by hymns created throughout the centuries of Christian history and expanded by hymns set in contemporary idioms. The presence of African-American, Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and African hymns deepens our sense of unity in Christ through the spirit. We share a rich hymnic legacy with many Christians, past and present. (Slough, iii)

Father God, you are holy, you're the first one HE-E! Let your love come on down and touch your children here on earth. Be with us HE-E! Jesus, we call you; watch over us HE-E! (Whiteshield, 78).

There are interesting parallels between the above quotations: on the one hand, both white (Mennonite) writers highlight the collaborative nature of their (inter)cultural commodities. On the other, both First Nations writers address a prayer to the Creator presuming the unity of all God's creations (people) on earth - perhaps a similar idea to inter-racial collaboration, but different in one important respect.

The difference here centers on the needs of the audience which are implied in each case: the audience of the white writers is presumed to require an explanation and contextualization of a cultural commodity created across the gap of difference, while the audience of the First Nations writers is presumed to believe in the divinely created community of people on earth. This suggests that these texts - *Stolen Life* and the *Hymnal* - are caught up in a critical debate for white authors concerning inter-racial collaboration in which First Nations writers are not similarly concerned.

This is undoubtedly the case for Rudy Wiebe and his involvement with Johnson's biography; Wiebe has been criticized in the past for writing novels concerning the experience of First Nations peoples, including his Governor-General's-award-winning novel *The Temptations of Big Bear*; which told the story of the Cree chief Big Bear. *Stolen Life*, co-written with Big Bear's great great granddaughter, Yvonne Johnson, has most recently revived this criticism. On the other hand, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, has not, to my knowledge, been critiqued on the grounds of appropriation of voice. Could such a critique be levelled at the hymnal, in particular, at its use of "African-American, Asian, Native American, Hispanic, and African hymns" (Slough, iii)?

In this paper, I will contend that a critique of the hymnal in this vein cannot be sustained. There are theoretical weaknesses in the category of appropriation of voice (or musical "inauthenticity"). Moreover this category cannot reflect the material, historical, and discursive elements of these hymns or the "communities" with which they are associated. These criticisms of the category of appropriation of voice can also allay the criticisms of Wiebe in his collaborative work with Johnson. A secondary interest here will be to assert that *religious* groups, including the Mennonites, must be examined in their specificity in order to determine if criticism based on the model of *ethnic* groups - such as critiques concerning the

authenticity of voice - can be usefully applied.

I will first survey popular criticism of Wiebe's collaboration with Johnson, and present the idea of appropriation of voice in literature. Secondly, I will construct a parallel critique of the inclusion of "Ehane he'ama", placing this inclusion in a music-historical context, and then present the idea of musical inauthenticity and appropriation. In both cases, my focus will be on discourses surrounding these cultural objects, rather than on the objects themselves, since I view authenticity and voice as social constructions rather than as essential properties of objects. I will conclude by examining the material, historical, and discursive circumstances surrounding the production and consumption of Wiebe and Johnson's novel, and of the *Hymnal*, considering the critiques I have presented in light of this examination.¹

Stolen Life and the Appropriation of Voice

Literary scholar E.F. Dyck notes that, "more than most Canadian writers, [Rudy Wiebe] has engaged in and been engaged in debates about 'appropriation of voice'" (Dyck, 29). He begins an examination of Wiebe's engagement with these debates by quoting Jo-Ann Thom's *Globe and Mail* review of *Stolen Life*, wherein Thom suggests that Wiebe has stolen a First Nations voice. She supports this claim by noting that Wiebe's name appears first on the cover of the novel, thus making it seem as if Wiebe is the primary author of Johnson's (Cree) autobiography rather than a collaborator and mediator. Further, Thom notes, Wiebe has involved himself in Cree politics, calling for the return of Big Bear's medicine bundle from the American Museum of Natural History to the Cree people, a call which Thom suggests is the proper prerogative of Cree leaders, not Wiebe, who is an outsider.

Davis Sheremata, writing in *Alberta Report*, offers direct and severe criticism of Wiebe as a poor writer who has achieved national status only by "mining" First Nations culture. According to Sheremata, Wiebe has built his writing career on seemingly politically correct stories appropriated from First Nations peoples, from *Temptations of Big Bear* (1973), to *A Discovery of Strangers* (1994). *A Discovery* tells the story of the interracial contact which occurred in the Franklin expedition of 1820, for which Wiebe won the Governor General's Award a second time. Sheremata suggests that Wiebe romanticizes First Nations people, and the sympathetic reading this creates hides his faults as a writer. Sheremata recounts the agonizing details of the trial of Johnson, and concludes that Wiebe's sympathetic outlook on Johnson is mistaken, citing Johnson's own lawyer's assessment of Johnson as guilty. The implication is clear: by appropriating *and misrepresenting* the voice and stories of First Nations people, Wiebe has supported a stellar writing career with less-than-stellar writing.

On the other hand, *Stolen Life* has also garnered a great deal of positive attention from the press. Maureen Harris, writing for *Books in Canada*, is "moved and awed by the courage these writers show in risking this book" (Harris). Harris suggests that Johnson risked the ire of her community and others about whom she related critical stories by writing *Stolen Life*; on the other hand, "Wiebe, by choosing to work with a Native writer and taking on the role of directing and shaping the work, faces complex questions of voice and authority - a minefield he already knows." (Harris). Harris suggests that this risk was taken because

Johnson's story needed to be told in order to be understood by the society which produced the conditions for Johnson's tragic life.

Harris notes that Johnson, because she had read *The Temptations of Big Bear*, in fact approached Wiebe to ask him what his connection with Big Bear was. This fact is also remarked on by Mary Nemeth of *Macleans*, Rebecca Carpenter of *Quill & Quire*, and Bob Weber of *Canadian Press Newswire*. Interestingly, both Wiebe and Johnson assert this connection: Johnson, Big Bear's descendent, says, "The spirit of Big Bear has been with Rudy for a long time, and it brought him and [me] together..." (Johnson quoted in Sheremata).

Wiebe has much the same opinion: "The spirit of Big Bear . . . that's central to our relationship. There's a spirit there that connects us, there's no question" (Wiebe quoted in Weber). Thus, a spiritual connection which seems to transcend class and race differences, claimed both by the direct descendent of this spiritual entity and by a non-descendent deeply touched by his story, is celebrated as an indication of the possibility of human community by Harris, Nemeth, Carpenter, and Weber.

E.F. Dyck offers a definition of the phrase "appropriation of voice" as it is used in Canadian literary criticism: "it almost always refers primarily to 'theft' of an ethnic group's 'story' by an outsider" (Dyck, 30). Dyck, however, considers the term "voice" and the idea of story as ethnic property, to be extremely ambiguous, thus more or less dissolving the phrase in terms of a specific meaning.

Alan Rew and John R. Campbell offer an anthropological formulation which may in part explain the "ownership" of stories by "ethnic groups." Social identities, Rew and Campbell suggest, are always defined in relation to an Other (Rew and Campbell, 13). However, social groups are nonetheless made up of individuals. Thus, in order for social groups to exist, individuals must create shared understandings of similarity and difference, such that "the very act of narrating one's own identity may be instrumental in attributing an identity to others" (Rew and Campbell, 13). Emotion and affect (that is, emotion attributed to a cultural object, code or utterance) play a role in maintaining these groups, in that through affect, acts which narrate identity have emotional investment and consequences.

Thus, while stories themselves may flow freely and in objective terms may seem to be without an "owner", they are centrally implicated in the construction of social identity, and as such, groups lay claim to the stories which seem to lay claim to them. That is, a story by which First Nations identity is narrated seems to be the property of the First Nations people, since it is a part of the act of asserting identity and thus not distinct from that identity, at least in the act of narration.

It remains a question, then, whether or not *Stolen Life* is seen *from the inside* as an appropriation of story. The question must be formulated this way if critics charging appropriation of voice wish to position themselves theoretically in the realm of social function and identity-construction, rather than naively in the realm of essentialized ethnicity. I will return to this question after the following consideration of another possible appropriation: the inclusion of a Cheyenne hymn in the Mennonite hymnal entitled *Hymnal: A Worship Book*.

Hymnal and the Appropriation of Voice, or Musical Inauthenticity

Using the model of voice-appropriation criticism set out above, it would be easy to

construct a musical criticism of the placement of “Ehane he’ama,” a Cheyenne hymn, in the Mennonite book *Hymnal*. First, one would assume that Mennonites are a historic European ethnic group who share the privilege of other people of European descent in North America, and thus they share responsibility for the plight of First Nations peoples in North America. Secondly, one would posit that, by placing this Cheyenne text in a Mennonite book, Mennonites, and particularly the editors of the *Hymnal*, have appropriated part of the identity of the Cheyenne First Nations people. Presumably, one might also suggest that this co-optation of story allowed some political benefit to the Mennonites, perhaps being the expiation of the Mennonite culpability for the position of the First Nations people in North America.

The religious discourse of hymns and church music in North America, of which *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, is a part, may inform such a critique by clarifying the relationship of this discourse to other musical discourses. The dominant body of North American hymnody, particularly the eighteenth-century English hymnody of Isaac Watts, and the nineteenth-century gospel hymns of Ira Sankey and Dwight Moody (Ellinwood, 217-221), was not challenged until the mid-twentieth century, with the advent of Vatican II. According to Alan Luff, a British hymn scholar, the Catholic folk movement hymns of Sydney Carter - new Catholic hymnody focussing on peace and justice - inspired a corresponding explosion of new hymns among Protestant writers, and the adoption by Protestants of many of the folk movement hymns themselves (Luff, 6). This new repertoire was largely distributed in supplemental hymnbooks (Sharp, 33-34) - for example, in the Mennonite context, the songbook *Sing and Rejoice!* - not in the primary hymnal used by churches.

Timothy Sharp points out that radical changes in the primary hymnals of North American Protestants did not take place until the decade of 1982-1992, when gender-inclusive versions of traditional hymns replaced their original versions, and new “Native American, Afro-American, Hispanic and Asian hymns”, which as a group, Sharp terms “international hymnody”, arrived in the primary hymnals used in Protestant churches. This transition corresponds to the passing from the red *Mennonite Hymnal*, for Mennonites, to the new blue *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. Both Sharp and church-music scholar Donald P. Hustad attribute the presence of this “international hymnody” to, on the one hand, increased connections between North American churches and non-Western churches, particularly via worldwide worship gatherings of churches, and, on the other, to the increasingly multicultural nature of North American churches themselves.

Of course, there has been a great deal of debate in North American churches about these changes. For example, Sharp quotes John S. Tomkins, who criticized the new *Presbyterian Hymnal* because it omitted many of the songs he knew and loved, replacing them with more newer, more politically correct hymns (Sharp, 38). The card which Tomkins draws here is interesting: “Insensitive as it may seem, no one consulted the vast majority of the 2.9 million Presbyterians who actually sing the hymns each Sunday” (Sharp, 38). Tomkins’ rhetoric implies that the majority of Presbyterians, insiders to the traditions and codes of the older hymnody, are being brushed aside so that the denomination can appear friendly to a minority of new folk, outsiders whose hymns now appear the *Presbyterian Hymnal*.

Thus, we have a picture of the discourse of church music as it stands: the world has come together in such a way as to challenge the hegemonic “Western” subjectivity of North American churchgoers. This challenge comes in the form of a change in repertoire which include

hymns which reference many cultures and places - sounds which are outside of the Anglo-American tradition of hymnody. The advocates of this change suggest that it reflects changes in the demographic constitution of the church, both in terms of North American congregations and in terms of the church as a worldwide entity: the church is no longer Western-dominated, but implicated in the global flows of culture and persons.²

As part of the increasing flows of culture and power between the world's churches, hymns which are other-than-Western are becoming centralized; although a Cheyenne hymn could certainly call North America home, it is perceived as non-Western and is included as part of the "international" repertoire in the Mennonite hymnal reflecting this new, global reality. But is the process of the inclusion of these hymns "innocent" of differential power relations? Further, as a cultural object, is "Ehane he'ama" changed by its inclusion in the *Hymnal*?

When it is placed within this larger discourse, the inclusion of "Ehane he'ama" in the Mennonite *Hymnal* comes to seem very similar to another globalizing phenomenon: the recent commercial expansion of world music and world beat. Here one finds a properly musical debate which is parallel to the literary debate concerning "authenticity of voice" and which is similar to my hypothetical "authenticity of voice" critique of the *Hymnal*.

Stephen Feld outlines this debate as centrally concerning the commodification of world musics, that is, the "repackaging" of musics all over the world in order to make those musics flow as commodities in the global market (Feld, 263). The debate thus turns on whether this commodification allows the "local" - that is, the non-Western - musical culture to assert its identity within the global economy and consciousness, or on the other hand, co-opts (appropriates) these musics and places them in a "standardized" commodity form which eliminates the uniqueness of the local and silences its political and identificatory voice.

One could clarify the ambiguity of this formulation in a manner analogous to my response to the ambiguity of "voice theft" above. Ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes suggests that it is the affective connection of music with particular places which allows it to "[evoke] and [organize] collective memories and present experiences of place with an intensity, power and simplicity unmatched by any other social activity" (Stokes, 3). These places and their perceived connection to individual and group identity allow music to delineate social boundaries, in a similar manner to that attributed to the narration of identity by Rew and Campbell. Stokes suggests that "authenticity" is the key concept employed in order to narrate identity using music: "We should see 'authenticity' as a discursive trope of great persuasive power. It focuses a way of talking about music, a way of saying to outsiders and insiders alike 'this is what is really significant about this music', 'this is the music that makes us different from other people'" (Stokes, 7).

Identity is narrated here by asserting difference: this is our music and it makes us different, and thus it is not *their* music. Thus, while music may be implicated in the global market in ambiguous ways, in the processes of musical articulation the ownership of certain music may be crystal clear from the inside. Stokes argues precisely this point: "ethnicities. . . positively 'demand to be seen from the inside'. . . the same is true of their musical strategies." (Stokes, 7).

In this sense, a key question concerning the inclusion of "Ehane he'ama" in the Mennonite *Hymnal* focuses our attention on how the circulation and presence of this hymn is seen from the inside. However, which inside: Mennonite or Cheyenne? Are these distinct categories?

How are they articulated? Stokes points to this problematic when he continues from his assertion that ethnic musical strategies must be seen from the inside, stating that on the other hand, “ethnicities can never be understood outside the wider power relations in which they are embedded.” (Stokes, 7).

However, as I have suggested, in the case of theoretical formulations of the authentic voice and of musical authenticity, these “wider power relations” can be profoundly ambiguous and difficult to apprehend. I will now turn to a critique of voice theory (with reference to Wiebe and Johnson) and the idea of musical authenticity (with reference to Whiteshield and the *Hymnal*), arguing that these “wider power relations” can be better understood by placing the particular and contingent histories of a cultural object in dialogue with the theoretical sphere.

Wiebe and Johnson - Stories in Common

Wiebe’s career path can be traced in part through the insider discourse of producing “Mennonite writing.” Hildi Froese Tiessen posits that Canadian Mennonite writing is post-colonial in that it is a discourse of marginality becoming central (Tiessen, 12-16). If Wiebe, a Canadian Mennonite writer, indeed conformed to this general schema of Canadian Mennonite postcoloniality, his narratives would concern themselves primarily with centralizing a particular “Mennonite” story and asserting its identity versus other stories.

Victor Doerksen suggest that, beginning with his first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Mary*, Wiebe pursues a “structurally critical” course, where his narratives tend to reach beyond singular groups to a space in between, and to erode even the newly centralized once-peripheral narrative of “Mennonite” (Doerksen, 207). Literary scholar W.J. Keith draws out a moment of this ethnic erosion in *Peace Shall Destroy Mary*, where the Mennonite protagonist tries to arrange a Bible class for the local Métis people (Keith, 86), which is interpreted as envisioning “Mennonite” as a non-ethnic category. Unfortunately, the project is cut short, but “Mennonite” as a fundamentally other / othering category has been questioned.

Importantly, it is through his engagement with Big Bear in the novel, *The Temptations of Big Bear*, that Wiebe becomes “the first major Mennonite writer to place the Mennonite experience in a broader framework” (Doerksen, 207), in fact suggesting that narratives can be held in common by all people. Doerksen locates the starting point for this universalizing humanist impulse in the Biblical text with which Wiebe begins the book:

God who made the world and all that is in it, from one blood created every race of men to live over the face of the whole earth. He has fixed the times of their existence and the limits of their territory, so that they should search for God, and, it might be, feel after him, and find him. And indeed, he is not far from any of us, for in him we live, and move and have our being. (Acts 17, in Wiebe quoted in Doerksen, 207)

This constitutes, in Doerksen’s reading, not a colonization of the story of Big Bear by a Mennonite writer, but rather an assertion that all stories are held in common, and thus a “necessary explosion of the Mennonite world view” (Doerksen, 208).

W.J. Keith - who points out that he himself is not of Mennonite background - suggests that Wiebe has written his novels in such a way that they are not “insider” narratives bu

rather more open stories which can be apprehended by anyone. This claim goes beyond Doerksen's readings of Wiebe's textual process as an explosion of the Mennonite world view; it suggests that Wiebe's work reaches outside of the textual explosion of ethnic categories within narrative, to the intentional structuring of a text so that it is open to a non-ethnic reading audience.

The circumstances of Wiebe's collaboration with Johnson suggest that this history of producing work which goes against the textual grain of many identity-narratives was continued in *Stolen Life*. While Yvonne Johnson was in prison, she read *Temptations of Big Bear*. She wrote Wiebe to inquire how he came to know and became able to communicate Big Bear's story: "Please help me share what it is you know, and how you got it. How is it you came to know as much as you do? Why were you led? What was the force behind you? Who are you?" (Johnson quoted in Harris). That Wiebe responded to her letter, and that the two have corresponded for some time since, suggests that Wiebe was read as an equal owner to Big Bear's story by Johnson.

I would suggest, then, that co-production of *Stolen Life* can be seen as an example of the universalist boundary-crossing work of Wiebe and Johnson, rather than a colonizing move on the part of Wiebe. Cultural studies scholars John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, and Brian Roberts point out that biography cannot be easily placed in terms of singular culture or class categories; rather they "cut paths in and through the determined spaces of the structures and cultures in which individuals are located" (Clarke et al, 111). Here the story of Wiebe and the story of Johnson have intersected - through the production and consumption of cultural commodities which play on biographical narrative - rendering it impossible to locate either author in a determinate (inaccessible to the Other) space.

After several years of discussion, Wiebe and Johnson decided to tell the story of Johnson's life. Neither writer remembers whose idea it was to collaborate on a book; the idea came out of the dialogue between them (Carpenter). And, according to Wiebe, both authors were satisfied with the book: "The selection, compiling, and arrangement of events and details in this book were done in a manner the two authors believe to be honest and accurate" (Wiebe, xii).

Ervin Beck suggests that Johnson must be considered as the central agent in the construction of *Stolen Life*, and Wiebe must be considered to be a mediator: "By relying on the sensitive understanding and compelling prose style of Rudy Wiebe, Yvonne Johnson has found a voice and created a space for her personal and social message in mainstream literary expression" (Beck, 574). Beck suggests provocatively that this book can be considered an answer to Gayatri Spivak's essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?": Johnson, as subaltern, had no access to a mainstream voice. However, by collaborating with a mediator, she gained access to mediated channels and to a narrative form by which she could place her story in the mainstream.

By tracing the circumstances of the production of *Stolen Life*, then, it is evident that the charges of appropriation of voice do not reflect the actual process by which the book came about. Wiebe did not pursue Johnson to steal her story, but rather collaborated as a mediator because Johnson perceived him as sharing in the universally comprehensible story of Big Bear. The notion of a singular ethnicity being deconstructed, of the margins centralized and then decentered, comes full circle in the production of *Stolen Life*: Wiebe's own voice here lecentered.

I have taken the position that - if appropriation of voice and its categories of discrete ethnicity are to be sustained - a key issue would be the *insider* response to the text: of course, the line of my argument here deconstructs the notion of a single insider to this text. However, let us for the sake of argument consider First Nations people to be insiders to the text, having an investment in it as an identity narrative which white people do not - which must be the frame of mind in which a critique around notions of appropriation of voice is constructed. The book *Stolen Life*, as Johnson's work, was the subject of Allison Kydd's article for the First Nations journal *Windspeaker*, "First nations writers nominated for Governor General's awards" (Kydd, 15). As the title suggests, the book is here apprehended as a First Nations story - significantly, in collaboration with Wiebe, who garners praise here for his other stories of First Nations people. Thus, even if one ignores the circumstances of production in relation to a critique of *Stolen Life* as an instance of voice theft, this particular instance of reception in relationship to the crucial question of "insider response" would suggest that such a critique is invalid.

"Ehane he'ama" and Cheyenne / Mennonite Voices - Whose Song is this?

Concerning the specific circumstances of production and consumption of "Ehane he'ama" as a part of the *Hymnal*, there is relatively little to say. Joan Fyock, in the *Hymnal Companion*, notes that Whiteshield used this hymn to introduce worship services which he led (Fyock, 84). Fyock also notes that the song is best taught by singing it, as it would be taught in a Cheyenne context. Fyock approaches the notions of the "ownership" of the song:

Traditionally, Cheyenne poets and musicians did not "own" their creations; rather, they considered their songs to be gifts from God. So, the Cheyenne elders who sang and recorded their hymns were happy to have their songs put into print because they knew the tradition was being lost. The feeling existed, however, that printed words were not to be trusted because of the many broken treaties. For that reason. . . Faith and Life Press will not give anyone permission to reprint unless they contact the Mennonite Indian Leaders' Council, even though Faith and Life administers the copyright. (Fyock, 84).

The circumstances of production here are clearly at least collaborative between the Cheyenne elder singer - presumably Harvey Whiteshield in this case - and the *Hymnal* worker who notated the song. Faith and Life, the Mennonite church publishing house which printed *Hymnal*, also respected these singers as having a continuing claim to the song's circulation in print. Thus, charges of "theft" can be dismissed fairly easily, concerning the production circumstances of "Ehane eha'ma" in the *Hymnal*.

The circumstances of its consumption are less documented, and little information is available. Of course, there is the admonition in the *Hymnal Companion*, and in another companion volume to the *Hymnal*, the *Hymnal Accompaniment Handbook*, to teach the song orally as the Cheyenne singers who provided the song would have taught it.

For lack of other data concerning the consumption of this hymn, I will speak as an insider here. As a student at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, I learned this hymn, alongside

First Nations classmate, from another student who became interested in First Nations songs through involvement in Mennonite Central Committee's advocacy program in the Lubicon community in Northern Alberta. This student played a bodhran drum³ in the style which he had learned from listening to First Nations drummers, and sang the line for us; we responded and learned the song in this way. As a song leader in various Mennonite churches, I have always taught the song in the way modeled by my classmate. It is interesting to note here that my classmate was also a part of a folk-band, and in this band he wrote songs concerning the political situation of the Lubicon, advocating change; the singing and drumming style of the songs was influenced by the music he learned while in the community.

This implication of "Ehane he'ama" in the increasing awareness of non-First Nations persons - including myself - of the circumstances and vitality of First Nations people follows a trajectory alluded to by George Lipsitz. Lipsitz suggests that aboriginal peoples have taken advantage of global channels of circulation of musical commodities in such a way as to "find new audiences and allies" (Lipsitz, 138), and to politicize these audiences concerning the situation of aboriginal people. Given this trajectory of consumption, criticisms charging appropriation of voice and musical inauthenticity would both be invalid and miss the mark of promoting and protecting First Nations people.

The question remains whether "Mennonite" and "Cheyenne" are distinct categories. Notions of musical authenticity are most often couched in the idea of a music being authentically the property of a particular ethnic group (Stokes, 6-7). Fredrik Barth proposes that the characteristics of an ethnic group are maintained not through essence but through social processes of "boundary maintenance". This suggests that, while ethnic groups are constructed, one cannot always become a part of such a group voluntarily, since in order for the group to exist as a social category, social boundaries must be maintained.

There is often categorical slippage between religious groups and ethnic groups. Paul Brass suggests that religiousness is crucial in the construction of ethnic groups (Brass, 88). Herbert Gans differentiates "Jewish religion" from ethnic "Jews" on the one hand (Gans, 150-152), and on the other treats "American Catholics" as an ethnic group (Gans, 153).

This slippage belies a difference between some religious groups and ethnic groups as defined by Barth: namely, while both groups are constructed and both participate in a process of identifying / othering, many religious groups have entry rites by which one can voluntarily become part of the group - while maintaining an ethnic affiliation. For example, by confession of the Catholic catechism and baptism, a person of any ethnic group can become a part of a Catholic religious group. Similarly, one can become Jewish, or Muslim, or Mennonite through voluntary conversion, confession of faith, and the appropriate entry rites.

Ethnic groups can dominate or form a historical core of a religious group: for example, persons of Irish origin form a historic core of American Catholicism (Day, 17). Swiss-German and Dutch persons are central in the historical story of Mennonites, and form a large part of Mennonite religious groups today. However, these Irish persons can leave the Catholic Church; these Swiss-German and Dutch persons can leave the Mennonite Church (see Dyck). There is a degree of voluntarism and flux in the formulation of ethnic groups. These must maintain boundaries to which heredity is an assumed defining factor. Therefore, even in a given historical moment, notions of authenticity concerning a religious group must be examined in light of the specific historical and discursive conditions of that religious group in order

to establish their utility in understanding that group.

There is, then, a specific history of Mennonites as a religious group that stands in relation to First Nations groups as ethnic groups. That relationship must be examined to determine if they are opposable entities in the case of "Ehane he'ama." The earliest immigrations of Mennonites to Canada initially maintained friendly relations with the First Nations people with whom they came in contact. Frank Epp notes that the Ontario Swiss-German Mennonites were taught survival skills by the First Nations people whose lands they occupied. (Epp 1974, 78). On the other hand, Leo Driedger suggests that the Dutch-Russian Mennonites who were settled in Manitoba were deliberately settled on First Nations land, and were aware that their ownership of these lands compromised the livelihood of First Nations people (Driedger, 58-59). Thus, in this first stage of relationship, Mennonites and First Nations people are clearly opposable entities, with the Mennonites standing roughly in a colonial relationship to the First Nations people.

In the U.S., however, by 1881 Mennonites had begun missions among the Arapahoe Indians in Oklahoma - resulting in persons who could be categorized as both Mennonite and First Nations (Epp 1974, 240). Furthermore, Ted Regehr points out that, in Canada, Mennonites began teaching and missionary activities with First Nations people due to the contacts and relationships established through Mennonite alternative service in World War II (Regehr, 333). The friendships established through development work and mission activities in Northern Manitoba resulted in transformation on the part of the workers - learning a new worldview from the First Nations people with whom they worked - and also in First Nations persons joining the Mennonite church.

In North America, thus, we have a history of persons who are both "First Nations Persons" and "Mennonites." A recent *Canadian Mennonite* article, concerning the third native Mennonite assembly, held this summer at the Hopi Mission School in Arizona, affirms the maturity and breadth of Mennonite-related church institutions made up primarily of these First Nations Mennonite persons (Zuercher). "Mennonite" in this formulation functions as a religious, rather than an ethnic signifier. And so it is problematic to make accusations of appropriation of voice, a theory which requires an inter-ethnic theft, against a group which is properly religious.

Thus, the specific history of Mennonite religious groups relating to First Nations ethnic groups allows for a certain amount of flux and overlap. Does this flux and overlap obtain in the case of the production of "Ehane he'ama"? A Mennonite organizational structure, the Mennonite Indian Leaders' Council, controls the distribution of copies of "Ehane he'ama". Harvey Whiteshield himself is ethnically Cheyenne and religiously Mennonite. In addition, the multi-ethnic Mennonite groups in which I learned and have taught "Ehane he'ama" included persons of First Nations, and of many other, backgrounds. Thus, in this specific instance, voice theory and authenticity critiques cannot be profitably applied, even strategically and momentarily, since the group which theoretically could have stolen the culture-object is not distinct from the group which theoretically "possesses" that object!

The voices which first sang "Ehane he'ama" were both "Cheyenne" and "Mennonite," and other Mennonites would consider themselves to be part of a single Mennonite group with these singers. More broadly, Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson consider each other as sharers of a profound and human story. They seek to share that story with society in general.

The stir which the story created in the press suggests that it has resonated widely across the diverse groups which make up Canadian society. By following these specific histories and discourses, I have considered the idea of appropriation of voice, and the trope of musical authenticity in the case of "Ehane he'ama" and *Stolen Life*. I have shown that these theoretical formulations are non-essential and far from universal. While ideas of appropriation of voice and musical inauthenticity can be applied strategically - that is, speaking concerning a particular construction of ethnic boundaries at a specific time, rather than speaking of essential ethnic characteristics - these formulations must be subjected to specific historical and material critiques.

Works Cited

- Barth, Fredrik. "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," pp. 75-82 in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity*: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Beck, Ervin. "World Literature in Review: Native American. *Stolen Life*." *World Literature Today* 73:3 (Summer 1999): 574.
- Brass, Paul R. "Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Identity Formation." pp. 85-90 in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity*: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Carpenter, Rebecca. "Big Bear's Legacy: a mutual interest in the native chief brought Yvonne Johnson and Rudy Wiebe together." *Quill & Quire* 64:6 (June 1998): 14.
- Clarke, John, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts. "Subcultures, Cultures, and Class." pp. 100-111 in Ken Golder and Sarah Thornton, ed., *The Subcultures Reader*. New York and London: Routledge, 1997
- Day, Thomas. *Why Catholics Can't Sing: The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste*. New York: Crossroad, 1990.
- Doerksen, Victor G. "From Jung-Stilling to Rudy Wiebe: 'Christian Fiction' and the Mennonite Imagination." pp. 197-208 in Harry Loewen, ed., *Mennonite Images: Historical, Cultural, and Literary Essays Dealing with Mennonite Issues*. Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, Ltd., 1980.
- Driedger, Leo. *Mennonite Identity in Conflict*. Lewiston, NY and Queenston, ON: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988.
- Dyck, E.F. "Thom Wiens to Yvonne Johnson: Rudy Wiebe's Appropriate Voice?" *Rhubarb* 1:1 (Nov. 1998): 29-33.
- Ellinwood, Leonard. "Hymnody: American," pp. 217-222 in Carl Schalk, ed., *Key Words in Church Music*. St Louis, MI: Concordia Publishing House, 1978.
- Epp, Frank H. *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Seperate People*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974.
- Feld, Stephen. "From Schizophonia to Schismogenesis: On the Discourses and Commodification Practices of 'World Music' and 'World Beat'", pp. 256-289 in Stephen Feld and Charles Keil, *Music Grooves*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Froese Tiessen, Hildi. "Introduction: Mennonite Writing and the Post-Colonial Condition." pp. 11-21 in Hildi Froese Tiessen and Peter Hinchcliffe, eds., *Acts of Concealment: Mennonite/s Writing in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo Press, 1992.
- Fyock, Joan A. Edited by Lani Wright. *Hymnal Companion*. Elgin, IL; Newton, KS; Scottsdale, PA: Brethren Press, Faith and Life Press, and Mennonite Publishing House, 1996.
- Gans, Herbert J. "Symbolic Ethnicity." pp. 146-155 in John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

- Harris, Maureen. "[Stolen Life: the journey of a Cree woman]." *Books in Canada* 27:6 (Sep. 1998): 6-7.
- Keith, W.J. "Where is the Voice Going To? Rudy Wiebe and his readers." pp. 85-99 in Hildi Froese Tiessen and Peter Hinchcliffe, eds., *Acts of Concealment: Mennonite/s Writing in Canada*. Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo Press, 1992.
- Kydd, Allison. "First nations writers nominated for Governor General's awards." *Windspeaker* 16:8 (Dec. 1998): 15.
- Lipsitz, George. *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism & the Poetics of Place*. London: Verso, 1994.
- Luff, Alan. "The Hymn Explosion after 25 years." *The Hymn: A Journal of Congregational Song* 46:2 (Apr. 1995): 6-15.
- Method, Suzanne. "[Stolen Life: the journey of a Cree woman.]" *Quill & Quire* 64:7 (July 1998): 30.
- Nemeth, Mary. "[Stolen Life: the journey of a Cree woman.]" *Macleans (Toronto Edition)* 111:28 (Jul. 13, 1998): 64.
- Regehr, T.D. *Mennonites in Canada, 1939-1970: A People Transformed*. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1996.
- Rew, Alan, and John R. Campbell. "Political economy of Identity and Affect," pp. 13-20 in Alan Rew and John R. Campbell, eds., *Identity and Affect: Experiences of Identity in a Globalising World*. London: Pluto Press, 1999.
- Sharp, Timothy W. "The Decade of the Hymnal, 1982-1992: Choral Piety and Belief Hardbound." *Choral Journal* 32:9 (April 1992): 31-44.
- Sheremata, Davis. "White man's burden: with Stolen Life, co-author Rudy Wiebe consolidates his status as Canada's apologist for the Indians." *Alberta Report* 25:31 (July 20, 1998): 28-31.
- Slough, Rebecca. "Introduction." p. iii in Rebecca Slough, ed., *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. Elgin, IL; Newton, KS; Scottdale, PA: Brethren Press, Faith and Life Press, and Mennonite Publishing House, 1992.
- Spickard, Paul R. and Kevin M. Cragg. *God's Peoples: A Social History of Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994.
- Stokes, Martin. "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity, and Music." pp. 1-28 in Martin Stokes, ed., *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*. Oxford / Providence, USA: Berg Publishers, 1994.
- Weber, Bob. "Unique literary partnership fostered by spirit of Cree Chief." *Canadian Press Newswire* June 19, 1998.
- Whiteshield, Harvey, translated by David Graber and others. "Ehane he'ama (Father God, you are holy)." number 78 in Rebecca Slough, ed., *Hymnal: A Worship Book*. Elgin, IL; Newton, KS; Scottdale, PA: Brethren Press, Faith and Life Press, and Mennonite Publishing House, 1992.
- Wiebe, Rudy and Yvonne Johnson. *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.
- Zuercher, Melanie. "Native Assembly reflects on Christ and culture." *Canadian Mennonite* 4:17 (Sep. 4, 2000): 16-18.

Notes

¹ My concern here is not so much that this history conform to a Marxist-materialist view of history, but rather that social theory should reflect history and present-day life in the everyday sense refer-

enced by the term “lived experience.” Here I am following George Lipsitz, who quotes C.L.R. James to suggest the interconnectedness of social theory and everyday experience: “In the end it is practical life and its needs which will decide both the problems of social and political existence and the correctness of a theory.” (James, quoted in Lipsitz, 153).

² For a social-historical account of the growth of the world-wide church, through Western missions and the growth of indigenous churches, see Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, *God's Peoples: A Social History of Christians*, p. 303-341, and pp. 426-454. Corroborating the claims of Hustad and Sharp, Spickard and Cragg conclude that the churches which initially emerged as a result of Western missions, are now independent entities which challenge Western churches to a more global sense of church constitution, and to concomitant changes in worship practice and economic / social work.

³ A bodhran is an Irish frame drum, which can be played in a manner similar to the frame drumming techniques employed by various First Nations peoples.