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‘Tomorrow Belongs to Me’: The journey of a show tune from Broadway to *Rechtsrock*

ABSTRACT

This study traces the reception history of the song ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Me’ from Cabaret (1966). The dramaturgical context of the song, Kander and Ebb’s pastiche style, Lotte Lenya’s involvement and Bob Fosse’s film adaptation have all contributed to the song’s re-contextualization and perception as an authentic Nazi hymn. Despite its origin as a show tune by two gay, Jewish Broadway veterans, artists from the Rechtsrock music scene have claimed the song. Drawing on Ingrid Monson’s concepts of ‘perceptual agency’ and ‘intermusicality’, this article reconciles different readings of the song lyrics. The complete liberation of the text from authorial intention in this case study raises important questions about reader agency, forms of censorship and the role of the artist.

KEYWORDS

‘Tomorrow Belongs
to Me’
Cabaret
Rechtsrock
alt-right
Nazism
reception studies

INTRODUCTION

When composer John Kander and lyricist Fred Ebb wrote ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Me’ for their 1966 hit musical *Cabaret*, they were aiming, for purposes of the dramaturgy, to musically capture the metamorphosis of 1930s German patriotic fervour into the intolerant, insidious ideology of the Nazis. Still, it can be safely presumed that the pair could never have imagined that one day

a group of concerned citizens would attempt to ban the song from a junior high school concert, having mistaken it as an actual Nazi youth song.

Yet, in May 1973, a headline in the *New York Times* proclaimed: 'Great Neck School Board Bars Inquiry on Nazi Song in Concert' (Anon. 1973). Great Neck, located on Long Island and perhaps best known as the setting of F. Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece *The Great Gatsby*, is an affluent Jewish community just outside New York City. After facing protest from upset parents, Richard Sherman, principal of Great Neck North Junior High, had 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' cut from the programme only one day before the actual concert. However, Leila Fried, the social action chairwoman of the Sisterhood of Temple Israel, remained unsatisfied with Sherman's actions and collected 130 signatures from other worried parents, questioning the motives behind the programming of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me': 'With the myriad of other choral songs available, the choice of such a number denotes at best an insensitivity – at worst, something more deplorable'.

At the school board meeting, superintendent Mortimer J. Abramowitz reassured attendees of the song's American provenance, while board president Stanley E. Rubenstein commended Sherman for the appropriate measures he had taken, and dismissed the motion to launch an official investigation as a 'holy war [or] witches' hunt'. According to the *New York Times*, the 250 people present applauded when the board squashed the petition.

The scandal of Great Neck is not an isolated incident. Over the years, Kander and Ebb have received many letters from upset audience members, complaining about the inclusion of a real Nazi song onstage. In an interview with Greg Lawrence (Lawrence et al. 2003: 64), they revealed that some had even made claims that they recalled hearing the song in Nazi Germany. On the one hand, this speaks to the remarkable skills of the songwriting team, who had indeed set out to create a faux Nazi hymn to illustrate the growing force behind the Nazi movement in the 1930s. On the other hand, the persuasive powers of the song also clearly demonstrate the potential vulnerability of audience members who do not always discriminate strictly between staged fiction and past realities. But how is it that a person who elects to attend an unambiguously artistic and 'artificial' spectacle of history onstage becomes convinced of its realness?

In the case of *Cabaret*, four factors facilitate the merging of musical theatrical fiction and perceived human memory: (1) the dramaturgical positioning and context of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' convincingly serves the transformation of 'folk song' to 'Nazi hymn'; (2) Kander and Ebb relied on elements from existing folk tunes and Nazi songs to shape their number; (3) the marketing strategy building up the affiliation of Lotte Lenya, Kurt Weill's widow, to the musical acted as guarantor for the authentic capture of Berlin's flair in the 1930s; and (4) in Bob Fosse's film version, 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' attains special status as the only song performed outside the Kit Kat Klub, the fictional nightclub the characters frequent.

The combination of the aforementioned factors presented in the first part of my article makes the tune susceptible to its co-opting by bands from the *Rechtsrock* music scene, where the song is performed and received as a pro-white anthem, whose origins are tied to Nazi Germany. Therefore, the second part reconciles the contradicting interpretations of the song, i.e. show tune or German folk song or Nazi hymn, through Ingrid Monson's concepts of *perceptual agency* and *intermusicality*, which can be seen as an extension of reader agency and *intertextuality* from literary theory.

Following a brief discussion of the history of *Rechtsrock* as a genre, using different covers of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' to illustrate stylistic, aesthetic and political changes in white supremacist circles, the final part of this article expounds the problems of reader agency and author ownership in a post-factual society in which special interest groups appropriate meanings and cultural artefacts to serve their interests regardless of facts.

1. A video of the scene from the Donmar Warehouse production can be viewed on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xbw8WGUptmE&feature=youtu.be&t=5m16s&ab_wwchannel=mutilationfixation.

DRAMATURGICAL CONTEXT

The story of *Cabaret* begins with the young American novelist Clifford Bradshaw, who travels to Berlin in the early 1930s to find inspiration for his new novel. There, he runs into Ernst Ludwig, who sends him to Fräulein Schneider for a room to rent and to the Kit Kat Klub for entertainment. Cliff becomes quickly entangled with the nightclub singer Sally Bowles, who moves in and becomes pregnant.

Halfway through Act One, a group of waiters at the club performs 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' a *cappella*. The song starts out as an innocent folk tune, invoking sentimental longing for simpler times with the pastoral themes of the opening verses. The simplicity of the setting and the catchy tune easily conjure up nineteenth-century-style German folk songs. However, as the piece progresses, nationalistic undercurrents emerge, displacing the initial nature-centred imagery with National Socialist (NS) buzzwords, such as 'glory' and 'fatherland'. Thus, when the song is reprised at the end of Act One, the audience's perception of it has changed, as it shifted from bucolic innocence to a disquieting tone.

Hard-pressed for money, Cliff accepts an errand run in Paris for Ernst, while his landlady gets engaged to Herr Schultz, the Jewish owner of the local fruit shop. At their engagement party, Cliff realizes that he has been running errands for the Nazis, when Ernst Ludwig warns Fräulein Schneider not to get involved with a Jew. Disgusted, the Nazi is about to leave when Fräulein Kost, another boarder of Fräulein Schneider, stops him. She intones 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' and Ernst quickly joins her. Soon the party guests gather around Ernst Ludwig and Fräulein Kost, singing along and outing themselves as Nazis, while Cliff, Sally, Fräulein Schneider and Herr Schultz watch from the sideline.¹

The Arcadian images in the song's lyrics are now checked for suggested Nazi metaphors: is the stag just a deer or a symbol of something more? What *kind* of glory awaits unseen? *Who* whispers, 'arise, arise?' And *what* sign is everyone waiting for? The lilting quality of the waltz tune is upset by the harsh diction of the protagonists and the accompanying accordion, which emphasizes the offbeat. The volume increases and becomes slightly more disorganized, as more and more people join in. Some audience members can easily get swept up in this frightening display of power, and experience the rousing and infectious side of music first-hand through witnessing various characters uniting in song.

The consequences are dire: as an outsider, the American novelist sees the writing on the wall and prepares to leave Germany as soon as possible. Fräulein Schneider breaks off the engagement, afraid to lose her livelihood. Herr Schultz moves away but will not leave the country, convinced it is just a passing fad. Sally decides against going with Cliff, has an abortion, and pursues her career as a nightclub singer. The audience is left with the unsettling feeling that they have just witnessed the beginning of the end of the world.

2. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from German into English are the author's.
3. Recent research by Bernd Kortländer and Anja Oesterhelt casts doubt on these allegations. Indeed, both authors call the addendum 'Verfasser unbekannt' into question. Oesterhelt examined 218 schoolbooks and lyrical anthologies from 1933 until 1945 and found Heine's poems were simply no longer printed altogether, including the 'Lorelei'; however, it is unclear how far her findings extend to songbooks, concert programmes and recordings. The ethnic disparity between Aryan composers and Jewish poets frequently offered a loophole to continue performing the works of Jewish artists.
4. For the sake of completeness, I want to briefly mention two other songs often brought into play by white supremacists: 'Die Wacht am Rhein/The Watch on the Rhine' and 'Die Fahne hoch/Flag Up'. Neither shares close stylistic similarities with 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me', so their adoption by white supremacists seems random at best.

In a manner, the dramaturgical arch of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' replicates what happened to popular German songs as they were appropriated by the Nazi movement in the early decades of the twentieth century. The most notoriously cited example is that of Friedrich Silcher's 'Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten' ('I don't know what it means')² (Silcher and Heine 1838), more commonly known as 'Lorelei'. Silcher's melody set Heinrich Heine's eponymous poem in the style of other nineteenth-century folk tunes, the song entered the canon of beloved German Lieder and remained entrenched during the rise of the Nazis.

The origin of this song's lyrics was a problem for the National Socialists, however: Heine, who had died in 1856, was Jewish. As a result, the 'Aryan composers' who primarily set his poems to music – e.g. Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, and Friedrich Silcher – posed a particular challenge to Goebbels' Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda ('Department for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda'). When they issued a recommendation that no Jewish authors be given airtime on the radio, the director of the Bayerischer Rundfunk ('Bavarian Broadcasting') reminded them pointedly that such an order would practically eradicate Schumann single-handedly from public radio (Goltschnigg and Steinecke 2008: 102). Walter A. Berendsohn (1935: 21) illustrated the absurdity of the Nuremberg Laws: since the Nazis could not control the continued dissemination of 'Lorelei', they simply proclaimed it a traditional folk song of unknown origin ('*Verfasser unbekannt*'). Theodor W. Adorno (1974: 95) picked up Berendsohn's uncorroborated claims in 1956 and inadvertently turned rumour into legend through his pivotal radio essays.³ Ever since then, the majority of people believes the Nazis appropriated Heine's 'Lorelei' in much the same manner as with Beethoven's 9th or Bruckner's 5th and 9th Symphonies. And in the 2004 edition of his *Heine Handbuch* ('Heine Handbook'), Gerhard Höhn still lists 'Lorelei' as the most well known German folk song abroad (Oesterhelt 2011: 327).

INSPIRATION OR EMULATION?

Considering how closely art imitates life in the instance of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me', queries into the song's genesis gain legitimacy. Early manuscripts of *Cabaret* certainly suggest that Kander and Ebb – as well as playwright Joe Masteroff and director Hal Prince – were familiar with 'Lorelei' and other Nazi tunes. An early, undated draft located in the Fred Ebb Papers at the New York Public Library (Masteroff et al. 1966: 1–71) mentions the club Lorelei and a recording of a song called 'Tomorrow Belongs to Us'. Since the title of the record is neither written in all caps – the usual designation for all original song material by Kander and Ebb in the drafts – nor provided with any lyrics, it is plausible that this is a reference to an actual recording of the popular Nazi song 'Es Zittern die Morschen Knochen' ('The Frail Bones are Quivering'). Written by Hans Baumann, the refrain goes in German, 'Denn heute gehört uns Deutschland/Und morgen die ganze Welt' ('For today Germany belongs to us/and tomorrow the whole world'). It is possible that Baumann's song was, therefore, known casually among Americans as 'Tomorrow Belongs to Us'.⁴ Yet, this is where the similarities between the two songs end.

Both *Cabaret's* 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' and Silcher's 'Lorelei' romanticize nature in the lyrics: glimmering mountaintops and forests, suns and sunsets,



Figure 1: Silcher and Heine, 'Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten' (mm. 1–8).

cliffs and the Rhine, etc. Tranquil scenery and mythological folklore evoke nostalgia and sentimentality. Even though the two songs differ in form, key and metre, they share a similar melodic contour overall and an identical head motif with a dotted neighbouring note (Figure 1).

The slow tempo creates a rhythmic ambiguity, which often allows listeners to hear 'Lorelei' with a waltz feel, even though it is a barcarole in $\frac{6}{8}$. This brings it closer to the $\frac{3}{4}$ metre of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me'. The most striking commonality, however, is found in bars 4–7, quoted directly from the opening bars of 'Lorelei' (mm. 1–2).⁵

While the accusations that Kander and Ebb used a Nazi song have proved untenable, one could argue that the composer and lyricist invited criticism, since 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' appears to be partially modelled on 'Lorelei'. To what extent this was a conscious act, if at all, is hard to determine, but insight might be gained into Kander and Ebb's work process from their interviews with Greg Lawrence:

Researching *Cabaret*, I listened to German jazz and vaudeville songs more than anything else, and then I just forgot about it. [...] I trust that there will be some kind of stylistic influence in what I'm doing, but it's a thing I do unconsciously while listening (John Kander).

We filter all of that through our own sensibility and out comes what we do. Sometimes people don't realize that. [...] Of course, there is always an unconscious element as well. (Fred Ebb).

(Lawrence et al. 2003: 63–64)

MARKETING LOTTE LENYA

As the above quotes illustrate, Kander and Ebb's shows are frequently pastiches, which invoke the historical setting of the plot. In *Zorba* (1978) they used popular Greek tunes, in *Chicago* (1976) they imitated specific vaudeville acts, such as Helen Morgan, Texas Guinan, Ted Lewis, Sophie Tucker, Eddie Cantor, Bert Williams, etc. (Lawrence et al. 2003: 127–28). *Cabaret's* score was critically acclaimed as the perfect blend of Broadway, German romantic ballads and Kurt Weill (Kelly 1966; Frankel 1966; Hirsch 1966c; Maloney 1966; Kerr 1966; Gottfried 1966), though it should be noted that, as so often, not all critics shared this opinion (Guidry 1966; Sullivan 1966; Rich 1966; Hobe 1966; Gilman 1966). Masteroff disclosed to Rex Reed, who wrote two profiles on Lotte Lenya for the *New York Times* and *Queens* magazine respectively: 'When you think of that era, you think of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya. Weill is dead but Lenya is still with us. When she walks onstage, she brings it all with her' (Reed 1966). In fact, no other actress was considered or approached for the role of Fräulein Schneider, and the role and songs were tailored specifically to Weill's widow.

The success of *Cabaret* hinged in no small part on the implicit endorsement of the *grande dame* of theatre by her appearance in the production. In

5. Among others, international critics, such as Frederick H. Guidry from *The Christian Science Monitor* and Friedbert Steller from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* noted the resemblance between 'Lorelei' and 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' in their reviews of the original Broadway and German productions.

exchange for top billing, Lenya promoted the show dutifully and tirelessly as an authentic copy of 1930s Berlin:

The boarding house sets and the room in 'Cabaret' are so very real to me. They take me back to the tired hotel rooms that Weill and I lived in. It is so vivid at times that I am almost swept back.

(Wahls 1967)

In 1933, Lenya and her husband fled Nazi Germany, though the actor was always quick to point out that they left because of the National Socialist's cultural policy cracking down on social and political theatre rather than because of Weill's Jewishness. Concerning her role in *Cabaret*, she mused: 'I really have lived through that [...] and that's why I can say it without even being sentimental. I just sing it and say it the way it happened. And that's that' (Tallmer 1966).

With such bold announcements from an eyewitness to the Third Reich policies, it comes as no surprise that audience members extended Lenya's general stamp of approval for the authenticity of *Cabaret* to the specific case of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' as well. After all, *Newsweek*, in a preview to the upcoming season, informed its readers that 'Lotte Lenya is also on hand to lend her *echt* to the make-believe' (Anon. 1966, emphasis original). Kander, singing praises during try-outs, encapsulates how firmly *Cabaret's* marketing strategy was rooted in his score's connection to Weill: 'We're lucky to have Lotte Lenya in the cast [...]. She lived through those days. Her husband was Kurt Weill, the composer whose music records that era's special combination of gaiety and sadness. She helped us keep everything authentic' (Hirsch 1966a). Since the creators lent authenticity to their music by so freely evoking Weill, it may have seemed only natural to some that they drew on actual music connected to Nazi propaganda.

BOB FOSSE'S ARTISTIC VISION (CABARET, 1972)

Film and stage are two fundamentally different media, which is nowhere more pronounced than in the genre of the musical. On Broadway, nobody bats an eye when the hero breaks out into song in the middle of the action onstage, whereas in a film such a move would be conceived as unnatural and disruptive by the casual viewer. Bob Fosse solved this conundrum with a dramaturgical stroke of genius: all musical acts in his film version of *Cabaret* were to grow organically out of the narrative as performances at the fictional Kit Kat Klub. Fosse got rid of all other song and dance routines outside the nightclub, thus he retained the fans of musical film and theatre while at the same time attracting the widest range of audience possible.

There is only one exception to Fosse's drastic measure: 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' is performed at a *Biergarten* by a Hitler youth, who, with his bleached-blond hair, square jaw and blue eyes, could be the poster boy for Aryan looks. Mitchell Morris has deconstructed the scene, exposing the lies behind the Nazi propaganda in the movie:

[...] there is always something a little pushed about [the voice's] production, and the line of the melody is constantly broken into single pitches, creating a 'notey' [sic] aggressiveness. The voice is also obviously dubbed – the youth's larynx never moves and his mouth is too deliberately posed,

and framed to look natural in the most artificial way. The song is a lie. And yet, the film cuts back and forth between the singing boy and the members of his audience, who begin to glow with an excited animosity as they join in with the song. The song is a lie that works [...]: the verses are laid out in such a way that we have no real expectation that the song will ever end.

(Morris 2004: 154)

Even though it is sung in English, rumours have persistently circulated that Fosse incorporated an actual Nazi song. Its detachment from the rest of the score by Kander and Ebb is facilitated not only by the stark stylistic differences between it and the typical show tunes, but also through the spatial remove from the Kit Kat Klub in the film. Several people have searched for the Nazi and/or German folk original, refusing to give up when their research ends with Kander and Ebb. As the following comment from a user on the white supremacist Internet forum, Stormfront, illustrates, the harder it proves to find evidence for the song's German provenance, the more some people become convinced that the 'original' is being suppressed or blacklisted as Nazi lore. On 8 December 2001, user Susan opines:

Since the song was apparently altered for that demoralizing movie, *Cabaret*, and considering the people who 'adapted' and 'altered' this song, I believe this German folk song deserves to be made available as the unaltered original German folk song, and completely unacknowledged from its 'Cabaret' origins.

(Stormfront 2001–15)

Ironically, this intransigence among followers of such a forum is reminiscent of the reaction amidst the parents of the predominately Jewish community of Great Neck, who were similarly convinced that the song was of German origins and used by the National Socialists. After the school board district halted the investigation into anti-Semitism at local schools, parents like H. William Galland of Plandome Heights, Long Island, still refused to accept Superintendent Abramowitz's explanation that the song was indeed the work of two Americans from the 1960s. In a letter to the editor, Galland set out to provide additional background on the song's origin, referring to it as 'Tomorrow Belongs to Us':

Its original text, in German, and the music were written in the 1930s by Nazi Germans. The theme verse – 'Wir werden weiter marschieren, und wenn alles in Scherben faellt, denn heute gehoert uns Deutschland, und morgen die ganze Welt' – is a direct reference to the infamous 'Crystal Night' (so-called because of the mountains of broken window panes) when synagogues and Jewish business establishments and homes were ransacked by Nazi hordes boasting that 'today it is Germany which belongs to us, tomorrow it will be the whole world'.

(Galland 1973)

It does not really matter whether Galland fell victim to a false memory or simply got his facts wrong; he clearly quotes the German refrain of the aforementioned song by Baumann. This presents another clue that 'Es zittern die morschen Knochen' might have been known as 'Tomorrow Belongs to Us' in the English vernacular. As Galland correctly approximates, Baumann published

6. It is unclear which local newspapers printed Galland's letter to the editor and Bernard's letter to Sherman, but their clippings are preserved in a scrapbook as part of *The Fred Ebb Papers* at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

the tune for the first time in his collection 'Macht keinen Lärm' ('Make No Noise') with the Catholic publisher Kösel and Pustet in 1933; however, this effectively pre-dates the November pogroms of 1938 by five years and negates Galland's claims about the song's references.

Not everyone residing in Great Neck at the time of the school scandal answered the call to arms by Leila Fried. Burton Bernard, who was also Fred Ebb's brother-in-law, came to the defence of the school principal under fire. In a letter to Sherman, which was later published in a local newspaper, Bernard called out 'the petition signers and clever manipulators of press releases [as] but an insignificant segment of the population of this enlightened and fair-minded community' (Bernard 1973). Bernard ridicules their allegations that a group of Jewish artists and school administrators would conspire to put an authentic Nazi tune onstage:⁶

Any fair-minded person reading this beautiful poetic lyric sees only a pastoral ballad suggesting future promise. This song could easily be sung by a group of young people anywhere in the world. The objectors are apparently unable to separate their myopic recollection of the fact that this song in the context of a theatrical presentation was sung by a young boy wearing a Nazi uniform. If we are to submit to this kind of tangential censorship, then we are indeed moving inexorably toward a condition of public acquiescence to a totalitarian mentality.

(Bernard 1973)

PERCEPTUAL AGENCY AND INTERMUSICALITY

In order to understand how the same song can be interpreted so antithetically, it is helpful to analyse the musical performance in the *Biergarten* scene as found in Fosse's *Cabaret* a little further. When the Hitler youth intones the song *a cappella*, a listener can opt to concentrate on the melody, the timbre of the young boy's voice, the tempo of the tune or the lyrics of the text, for example. As the accompaniment sets in during the second verse and expands during the third, the choice widens even more. In a similar way to the more familiar Cocktail Party Effect, which allows people to single out a conversation partner's voice from the rest of the crowd, listeners can shift their focus from the bass line to the rhythm to the harmonic progression to the lyrics to tracking individual voices or instruments, etc.

Musicologist Ingrid Monson calls this selective guided listening process '*perceptual agency* – the conscious focusing of sensory attention that can yield differing experiences of the same event' (2007: 537, emphasis original). Thus, someone who might concentrate on the melody might hear a gentle, pastoral ballad like Burton Bernard, whereas someone who concentrates on the aggressive accompaniment, consisting of loud brass and march-like drums, might rather associate it with a belligerent Nazi song. Therefore, perceptual agency can account for a plethora of aural encounters, which are all filtered through people's previous experiences as well as their individual sociopolitical and cultural backgrounds. In order for Galland to recognize the line 'tomorrow belongs to me' and associate it with 'denn heute gehört uns Deutschland und morgen die ganze Welt', he must have been familiar with Baumann's lyrics. This process of referencing one text to another is called *intertextuality* by literary theorists such as Julia Kristeva (Roesner 2014: 221).

Likewise, the first few bars of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' link the show tune to 'Lorelei' because of the musical quotation. Whether it was intended by the creators or not, listeners who recognize the similarities will inevitably draw connections to the German folk song. The 'oompah'-style accompaniment in the *Biergarten* scene might moreover make the tune sound more German to someone familiar with German beer hall music. Monson describes this 'intertextuality in sound' as *intermusicality* (1996: 97):

[...] people hear music over time as well as in time; that is, they listen in relation to all the musics they have heard before, recognizing in particular performance similarities, differences, quotations, allusions, and surprises that contextualize their hearing in the moment. They relate these aural signs and markers to a web of ideas and discourses they may have encountered [...] as well as to their understanding of history.
(Monson 2009: 26)

However, the human brain does not necessarily contextualize experiences accurately. Sometimes it will flesh out the details based on what makes sense to someone according to their past experiences and previous knowledge, as for example Galland placing 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' within the framework of the November 1938 *pogroms* and Baumann's Nazi song. To oversimplify and phrase it more pointedly: people will hear what they want to hear, including the *Rechtsrock* music scene, which, since 1982, has wholeheartedly embraced the nationalistic ring to the lyrics in 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me'.

CO-OPTION IN THE RECHTSROCK SCENE

During the skinhead revival of the late 1970s in England, punk rock bands like Skrewdriver began to infiltrate skinhead subculture with their particular brand of aggressive, proletarian street punk, also known as Oi! music, which pushed themes of racial superiority and white nationalism.⁷ After the Southall riots in 1981, the British press lumped together followers of Oi! music and the skinhead scene, and branded them collectively as a violent community of white nationalists. Right-wing bands like Skrewdriver, whose 'gigs resemble[d] Nazi rallies' (Brown 2004: 164), used this golden opportunity to radicalize 'skinhead rock' (Brown 2004: 163) further in the 1980s, creating a hybrid form of punk rock, Oi! music and heavy metal.⁸

In 1987 Skrewdriver's front man, Ian Stuart,⁹ founded 'Blood & Honour' after the demise of the White Noise Club (WNC). The WNC was affiliated with the white supremacist movement the National Front, and they organized so-called 'Rock Against Communism'¹⁰ (RAC) concerts, which were frequently headlined by Skrewdriver, beginning in 1979 (Brown 2004: 164). The goal of 'Blood & Honour' was to create a musical network through which different white supremacist bands could connect with each other and promote their music to interested audiences on an international level. In Germany, 'Nazi rock' (Brown 2004) is commonly known as *Rechtsrock* (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2007), whereas in the United States, the term 'white power music' is widely used (Perry 2000: 122; Teitelbaum 2014). These umbrella terms encompass different sub genres, such as Nazi punk, hatecore, National Socialist black metal (NSBM), but also increasingly folk, rap, pop and country music in recent years, as the scene is trying to reach a broader audience. For

7. Oi! music derived its name from the popular English phrase of saying hello, which featured frequently in the refrains of street punk songs. Like the original skinhead scene, some members were openly racist, while others were declared leftists.
8. Notice the conscious misspelling of Skrewdriver, typical of the metal genre.
9. Ian Stuart was born Ian Stuart Donaldson but dropped his last name later on in life.
10. RAC was created by political activists in the National Front to counteract the popular Rock Against Racism movement.

11. Punk chords lack the third and allow players to play different chords with the same fingering.

reasons of convenience and simplicity, here I shall refer to all these different styles as *Rechtsrock*. Regardless of the genre or style, the lyrics of various types of white nationalist bands are filled with similar racist, xenophobic, homophobic, anti-Semitic and seditious notions. They frequently toy overtly with imagery from Nazi Germany, the Second World War and Norse mythology, glorifying violence and employing the point of view of the victimized young white working-class male (Brown 2004: 167; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2007: 3).

Seven years after the theatrical release of Fosse's *Cabaret*, Stuart adapted 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' for his group's album *Hail the New Dawn* (1979). Detractors of punk music might say that the show tune's easy harmonic progression might have attracted Skrewdriver musically because the genre is known for its simple, riff-based, power chord punk style.¹¹ 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me', which alternates primarily between the tonic and the dominant, gains its complexity through the vocal arrangement and orchestration. The subtle nuances there, such as the echoing voices or the key change from D major to E-flat major, are however missing from Stuart's version.

Here, the song opens with a manipulated sound that imitates a clapping crowd. Laid over an electrostatic drone, it sets up the fast pace of the song. A six-note guitar riff is repeated four times, before the band settles into the typical power chord style accompaniment for the rest of the song. Skrewdriver harnesses the aggressive tone and rhythmic drive from Stuart's rough singing and the heavy backbeats on the drums. The most notable difference between Kander and Ebb's original and Skrewdriver's rendition is the change of metre from triple to quadruple time. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Stuart also recorded a rockabilly version with his side project The Klansmen (The Klansmen and Stuart n.d.) and an acoustic version with Stigger (Stuart and Stigger 1991). One can muse about his motives and intentions, such as whether he was aware of the song's provenance or not but, after Stuart's death in 1993, these questions will likely go unanswered.

Before his death, however, Stuart also helped to connect the skinhead scene in England with neo-Nazi circles in Germany. He toured together with the German band Störkraft ('Disruptive Force') and facilitated record deals for WNC bands on German labels like Rock-O-Rama in 1982 (Brown 2004: 164). Thus, it comes as no surprise that the *Rechtsrock* scene in Germany continues to pay tribute to the figurehead of 'Nazi rock' with covers of his songs. The proliferation of his version of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' exemplifies his international following (Figure 2).

The German band, Endstufe ('Final Step'), recorded a riff-based acoustic piano version and dedicated it to Stuart (1994). Radikahl ('Radical') made slight alterations to Robert Gilbert's official translation, when they performed the song in German (1996). For instance, '[d]ein Ruhm soll uns Wegweiser sein/Die Welt gehört uns und die Nacht vergeht' ('[s]how us the sign your children have waited to see/The morning will come when the world is mine') becomes 'Ich weiß, wir stehen nicht allein/Uns kann niemand stoppen, es hat keinen Zweck' ('I know we're not alone/Nobody can stop us, there's no point [in trying]'). These two lines from the fourth verse convey a more aggressive and martial tone than the Broadway original ever suggested. Besides Wolfsrudel (*Für Führer und Volk* ['For the Führer and the People'] 2000), the right-wing extremist German duo Annett und Michael Müller also added 'Der morgige Tag ist mein' to their repertoire (2005), although the latter follows Kander and Ebb's version more closely.

Band	Album	Style	Year
Skrewdriver	<i>Hail The New Dawn</i>	Rock'n'roll	1984
The Klansmen with Ian Stuart	<i>44 The Complete Works</i>	Rockabilly	No date
Ian Stuart and Stigger	<i>Patriotic Ballads</i>	Acoustic guitar	1991
Endstufe	<i>Schütze Deine Kinder</i>	Acoustic piano/ rock ballad	1994
Radikahl	<i>Wach auf!</i>	Hard rock	1996
Wolfsrudel	<i>Für Führer und Volk</i>	Unavailable	2000
Saga	<i>Live and Kicking</i>	Acoustic piano/ pop rock ballad	2001
Annett und Michael Müller	<i>Balladen des Nationalen Widerstands, vol. 4</i>	Acoustic piano/ pop ballad	2005

Figure 2: List of 'white power' covers of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me'.

Rechtsrock has proven to be an invaluable recruitment tool for neo-Nazis in Germany, which also facilitates the formation of a Nazi skinhead identity (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2007: 8). In Germany and Austria, where possession and trading of Nazi paraphernalia as well as actively re-engaging in Nazism is prohibited by law, *Rechtsrock* bands have come under the scrutiny of the countries' respective offices of the Verfassungsschutz, tasked with the protection of the respective constitutions. Over the years, this resulted in the indexing of several albums by the Böhse Onkelz ('Mean Uncles'), Landser (an archaic term for the German equivalent of a private in the military) or Störkraft for seditious lyrics, which glamorize violence and/or endanger the youth. Unfortunately, these measures frequently have a detrimental effect because they generate more publicity for these otherwise niche bands, turning their music into the forbidden fruit some teenagers are eager to get their hands on. In order to circumvent prosecution, *Rechtsrock* bands either have lawyers vet their lyrics, or they produce their albums abroad, primarily in the United States (Bundesministerium für Verfassungsschutz 2007: 23). Co-opting pre-existing songs of an ambiguous nature like 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' certainly also offers a legal loophole.

The decade after the radicalization of the skinhead scene saw continued efforts by white supremacists to expand and consolidate their power. The development of the World Wide Web in the 1990s has also helped to 'facilitate the creation of a collective identity of the fractured hate movement' (Perry 2000: 123). Suddenly, neo-Nazis in Germany and Austria were able to communicate quickly and conveniently from their homes with white supremacists in the United Kingdom, ultranationalists in Scandinavia, or 'identity churches' and the KKK in the United States. One such platform is Stormfront, which was founded by Donald Black in 1995 (Perry 2000: 121). Thanks to the Internet, Barbara Perry observes, it is now easier than ever to organize concerts and sell CDs around the world:

Resistance Records [...] is North America's largest distributor of White Power music. Their web site offers audio excerpts of dozens of such CDs.

Moreover, it includes downloadable album covers, and online ordering. Operation Ghetto Storm goes one step further. In addition to all of the above, this White Power band site provides written lyrics of its music.

(Perry 2000: 122)

During the 1990s, white supremacist activists like the former KKK Grand Wizard, David Duke, set their eyes on moving a conservative agenda espousing racism, xenophobia and homophobia from the fringe to mainstream politics. They toned down their rhetoric, rebranded themselves as white nationalists – or ‘the alternative right’ most recently – and exchanged their hoods and bomber jackets for suits and ties (Perry 2000: 120). In the United States, they found a new home in the re-aligned conservatism of the GOP under Reagan and G. H. W. Bush (Perry 2000: 126–27). In Austria, the influx of war refugees from the Balkans helped boost the numbers of the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (‘Freedom Party of Austria’) in the 1990s so much, they came in second at the parliamentary elections, thereby allowing the Österreichische Volkspartei (‘Austrian People’s Party’) to form a coalition government with them in 2000. In 1999, the UK Independence party (UKIP) experienced a shift to the right under Nigel Farage. The National Democratic Party (NDP) in Germany won their first seats in state parliaments since the 1960s, all of which are located in former East Germany (Saxony, 2004 and 2009 and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 2006 and 2011), despite repeated attempts by legislators to have the party banned. The numbers for the Front National in France have been rising steadily, which culminated in a run-off between Jean-Marie Le Pen and Jacques Chirac in the presidential elections in 2002.

The music of the Swedish singer Saga can be seen as a reflection of that political trend in the *Rechtsrock* music scene. In her solo performances, she frequently rejects her NSBM roots and the traditional punk style, referring to her music as ‘freedom pop’ (Teitelbaum 2014: 407). Her cover of ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Me’ illustrates those aesthetic choices: the overdubbed vocals are the most aggressive feature in her decelerated rendition, which retains Stuart’s $\frac{3}{4}$ metre. This brings out more clearly the syncopated rhythm and the melodic alterations Stuart made to the original. The gentle piano accompaniment is harmonically and rhythmically more complex than Skrewdriver’s guitar riffs. Towards the end of the song, the synthesizer becomes more prominent in the background, as Saga’s voice and the piano accompaniment gradually fade out. According to ethnomusicologist Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, Saga is currently the top act of the *Rechtsrock* scene (2014: 406) and her Skrewdriver covers make their music appealing to completely new audiences outside the classic skinhead circles (Teitelbaum 2014: 413). Just as the toned-down rhetoric of right-wing populists speaks to a broader conservative constituency politically, moderate conservative ears might find Saga’s softer pop also more attractive.

The 2000s can be characterized by a period of sophistication: armed with pseudoscientific claims in the stead of vitriolic diatribes or combat boots, white nationalists maintain a professional appearance on mass media, such as television, the Internet or social media. Holocaust deniers rely on aerial photography and DNA evidence to revise history (Perry 2000: 120). For example, *Rechtsrock* fans on Stormfront cite Peter Watson, a historian and journalist, who maintains in his book *The German Genius: Europe’s Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution and the Twentieth Century* that ‘Tomorrow Belongs to Me’ was written for the Catholic youth movement

by Baumann and published as 'Morgen gehört mir', which 'was popularized in the 1972 film *Cabaret*' (2010: 636). Without disclosure of the particular song anthology in which the song was supposedly published, it is impossible to corroborate his sources, which makes his scholarship susceptible to misinterpretation and appropriation by neo-Nazis because this type of source ambiguity and lack of fact-checking is very common in revisionist historiography.

Others, like Andrew Hamilton (2011) from the nationalistic Counter-Currents Publishing, fabricate their own cultural theory to defend and encourage the appropriation of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' by *Rechtsrock* bands. While he acknowledges Kander and Ebb's authorship, he praises the co-option of the tune as 'reverse engineering, or even *reverse culture distortion* [emphasis in the original]: a song by Jews intended to convey an anti-white message has been transmuted into an explicitly pro-White anthem'.

Hamilton's attempt to couch his racial programme in cultural theory is reminiscent of how Nazis embedded theirs in racial biology in order to justify their hierarchy of races with the Aryan one at the top. Hamilton invents his own terminology, i.e. 'reverse culture distortion' to describe subversive appropriation, just as Alfred Ploetz coined the term 'Rassenhygiene' ('racial hygiene') to circumscribe ideas of racial elitism and purity in the Weimar Republic. Anti-miscegenation laws in the Southern United States before the Civil Rights Act, South African Apartheid, and the Nuremberg Laws of Nazi Germany have in common that they base their concerns for ethnic purity on 'scientific' racism, derived from phrenology, craniometry, eugenics, etc.

It would be so easy to dismiss racist skinheads chanting a show tune written by Kander and Ebb, two gay Jewish-Americans, as stupid and blissfully ignorant. Yet, two examples from the last two decades illustrate the dangerous role *Rechtsrock* can play in the radicalization of right-wing extremists. First, in 2000, three young neo-Nazis in Germany chanted the song 'Sturmführer' by Landser during the murder of a Mozambiquian immigrant (Brown 2004: 167). Second, Anders Behring Breivik, who committed the 2011 terrorist attacks in Norway, praised Saga as 'the best and most talented patriotic musician in the English speaking world' (as cited in Teitelbaum 2014: 406):

Marxist and multiculturalist character-assassins will claim that Saga is an evil, national-socialist monsterband from hell, due to her success. [...] Saga and similar patriotic heroes and heroines of Scandinavia [...] had to face political persecution and demonization for years. Yet they continue their brave struggle to prevent the demographical and cultural genocide of the Scandinavian and European tribes.

(Breivik as cited in Teitelbaum 2014: 427)¹²

Both incidents demonstrate the possible consequences of repeated calls to arms in *Rechtsrock* lyrics, when troubled radical individuals decide to answer them literally by committing violent crimes.

The Syrian refugee crisis and Islamic terrorist attacks on European soil in the last few years have further contributed to a growing polarization in many Western societies. 'The Muslim' has currently replaced 'the Jew' as the go-to target of racially motivated prejudices, capitalizing on differences in physical appearance, cultural background and religious beliefs. Xenophobia comes shrouded in anti-Islam, anti-refugee and anti-immigration rhetoric today. In the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015, German chancellor

12. Teitelbaum's use of this material significantly reduces a longer extract from Breivik's original manuscript (indicated by the ellipses).

Angela Merkel tried to reassure the Muslim communities in the country by quoting former German president, Christian Wulff, at a press conference: 'Der Islam gehört zu Deutschland' (Anon. 2015). Translated into English, this phrase means literally 'Islam belongs to Germany' – a fact, which the Islam-critical blog BlazingCatFur (2015) took advantage of, when they posted a still of the Hitler youth from *Cabaret* who sings 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' in the *Biergarten* scene. Conceived as a clever play on words, the image juxtaposed Merkel's quote in its English translation on the left side with an excerpt of the lyrics from the Kander and Ebb song on the right side – 'The morning will come when the world is mine. Tomorrow Belongs! Tomorrow Belongs! To Mo! [*sic*]' – and asks the rhetorical question: 'Do you think you can still control them, Ms. Merkel?'

In times where a rising number of people willingly condone, if not openly support, racist, xenophobic and/or homophobic populism in mainstream politics in order to protect their own interests, pay back the establishment, or ease their fear of terrorism, the risk of normalizing radical ideologies becomes ubiquitous. Allowing white supremacists to hide behind such labels as 'alternative right' or 'white nationalism' trivializes and obscures the threat emanating from them. Since President Obama's election in 2008, the ultra-conservative Tea Party has increasingly dictated the course of the Republican Party in the United States, demonizing homosexuals and Mexican and Arab immigrants, as well as disenfranchising African American voters. In the autumn of 2014, the PEGIDA movement, i.e. the organization of Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident, took hold of Germany. The unprecedented success of populists and demagogues in 2016 has led to the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom, Norbert Hofer's very close and highly publicized head-to-head race for president in Austria, and Donald Trump's election to President of the United States and his appointment of Steve Bannon, former manager of the alt-right news platform Breitbart News, as his chief strategist.

Courting hate groups and flirting with radical racist sentiments in the population is playing with fire, as the fifth episode of the fourth season of Netflix's hit series *Orange Is the New Black* (2016), 'We Shall Always Have Baltimore', shows quite plainly: Piper Chapman, a WASP from New York doing time for smuggling drug money, creates a task force to protect her own (illegal) business interests, which are threatened by a rising Dominican prison gang. The group's first meeting deteriorates into a Nazi rally because the majority of the all-white volunteers are closet racists. Piper can only watch in horror, as the angry mob chants, 'white lives matter', while 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' begins to play in the background. It is only a question of time until one loses control of such a dangerous crowd.

CONCLUSION

So what does this case study mean for artists in terms of authorship and ownership? First, it demonstrates how quickly and easily they can experience a loss of control over their work once they 'put it out there' for the public to receive. Since literary theorists Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault proclaimed the death of the author in the 1960s, one might argue that Kander and Ebb's intentions no longer matter anyway. Indeed, only the complete disregard for their role as creators allows Galland (1973) to contextualize 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' as an authentic Nazi tune, substituting *intertextuality* for the authorial

intention. And Wolfsrudel credited Ian Stuart with writing 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' on their albums *Für Führer und Volk* (2000), *Dem Deutschen Arbeiter* (2001) and *Freiheit Für Das Deutsche Land* (n.d.).

Should performances of 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' be restricted to theatrical productions of *Cabaret* or at least banned from educational facilities to avoid potential conflicts and misunderstandings? In addition to administering royalties, collecting societies could approve performance rights on an individual basis – but what should the criteria be? Such regulations might, after all, prove too difficult and cumbersome to facilitate. So, could self-regulation by artists, then, be the answer? They could furnish controversial works proactively with warning labels or clarifying statements. However, that would require audiences to actually read them and inevitably lead back to prioritizing the author's intention over reader's reception and not necessarily prevent misinterpretation or appropriation.

While the co-option of the tune by the *Rechtsrock* scene demonstrates that the interpretation of a song cannot be controlled in any way, censorship is the wrong answer. This study reveals the need for a critical and balanced analysis of motivations, intentions and interpretations from both listeners or readers, and composers or authors. The deliberate misappropriation and goal-oriented application of agency in radical-right extremist circles, for instance, constitutes for many a chance to 'use the enemy's tools against them', as one Stormfront user put it, when they reclaim 'Tomorrow Belongs to Me' as their own. In a time, where reader agency has reached a point where people choose, sometimes even create, the facts they want to believe according to how they fit their preconceived notions of the world, it becomes necessary to take into account how a reader's personal background might inform their interpretation of a text. *Because* it is impossible to regulate the reception history of a song, critical reflection and careful evaluation of all constituents becomes indispensable.

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