

# “Enough of that Dance-Hall Razzmatazz” The Cultural Impact of Music in Kevin Major’s Lead Me Home and the Role of the Musician as Racial Ambiguity

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## **“Enough of that Dance-Hall Razzmatazz”:**

### The Cultural Impact of Music in Kevin Major’s *Lead Me Home* and the Role of the Musician as Racial Ambiguity

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David Mitterauer

Well before *Come From Away* (2013) centred Newfoundland in the otherwise predominantly American narrative of 9/11, Kevin Major strongly relied on music for his play *Lead Me Home* (2009)<sup>1</sup> to dramatize the 14 October 1942 attack by the German U-boat *U-69* that sank the Newfoundland ferry *SS Caribou* on its way from North Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. The play premiered in August 2009 and ran for two seasons at Rising Tide Theatre in Trinity, Newfoundland. *Lead Me Home* went through 14 drafts from the summer of 2008 until the premiere, two drafts for the second season in 2010, and three more prior to its publication in the *Breakwater Book of Contemporary Newfoundland Plays* in 2014. Major adapted the play for the novel *Land Beyond the Sea* in 2019.

Although one hesitates to characterize *Lead Me Home*<sup>2</sup> as a musical, music in the play takes on a complex function as it fuses the performative characteristic of the musical with the realism of historical fiction while, simultaneously, complicating the characters’ relationships and the performance of culture and identity. Live music becomes a dramatic device worth minute attention when the playwright juxtaposes the music with the play’s overall mood — especially when the play interrogates a distinct Newfoundland identity without drawing to a greater extent on Newfoundland folk music traditions. Major resists the predominant narrative that the attack on the *Caribou*, a civilian

vessel, was solely a disaster for Newfoundland and, from a post-Confederation perspective, Canada, and discusses the wider ramifications of cultural dominance exacerbated during wartime. Music both sets the mood for the disaster and profoundly inflects our understanding of the characters and their cultures, even racializing the dramatic space.

I argue that the mood shift from accompanied swing-era tunes to a cappella Christian hymns levels the social hierarchy between America and Newfoundland while it erases African-American musicianship, first, by investing the white musician with an unsettling racial ambiguity that reflects on the exploitation of black music for white entertainment and, then, by eliminating the piano-playing Buzz, an American soldier, from the play. After showing how Major's various drafts impact our understanding of the play and the central conflict between Charlie and Hank, I will discuss Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Lifeboat* (1944) as intertexts that racialize the character of the musician. I will show that Major points to how the Newfoundlanders' ready embrace of American culture through the American military presence incorporates Newfoundland culture into American neo-colonial logic and renders Newfoundland culturally complicit in American racism.

### **Staging a Catastrophe: The Structure and Development of *Lead Me Home***

With its extensive cast of 14 characters, *Lead Me Home* mounts a salmagundi of voices with at times disparate cultural backgrounds converging around the governing action of the U-boat attack. The play is divided into two acts. The six scenes of the first act alternate between the lounge of the *Caribou* and the approaching U-boat attack. In the lounge, a motley assembly of people gathers to pass the time of the crossing. The Newfoundlanders are Stewardess Bridget "Bride" Fitzpatrick from Bay Roberts, contractor William J. Lundrigan from Corner Brook, and Assistant Steward Charlie, Third Officer Harold Taverner, and Assistant Steward Alex Bateman from Port aux Basques.

The foreigners are American soldiers Buzz and Hank, the Haligonian civilian Gladys Shiers and her children, the Canadian Nursing Sisters Margaret Brooke and Agnes Wilkie, and the Royal Canadian Air Force pilot Archibald Jones. The other scenes pivot on Captain Benjamin Taverner (in secondary sources often with the alternative spelling *Tavenor*) of the *Caribou*, but the rising action introduces U-boat commander Oberleutnant<sup>3</sup> Ulrich Gräf (not to be confused with Nazi General SS Brigadeführer Ulrich Graf) and Captain James Cuthbert of the Canadian minesweeper *Grandmère* (the escort of the *Caribou* for that night). The dramatis personae do not comment on characters' ethnicities, but cast and diction imply that Major conforms to historical events as all passengers on the *Caribou* were of European ancestry. The seven scenes of the second act equally alternate between the lifeboat, which carries Lundrigan, Hank, Charlie, Bateman, Margaret, and Mrs. Shiers, and Cuthbert hunting for Gräf's U-boat. Both the lounge and the lifeboat are locales of interpersonal conflict and wider cultural debates.

Generally, Major is only secondarily interested in narrating the catastrophe and uses the historical frame as a space for characters to perform their various cultures. The first act, with the *Caribou*'s lounge centre stage, opens with passengers boarding the ferry, finding their cabins, and socializing. The anxiety of a possible U-boat attack is pronounced, particularly in Taverner's restlessness. Major establishes an escapist mood in the lounge when music, singing, and dancing underscore Hank's quest for a quick fling with Margaret, Bride's romance with Jones, and the young Newfoundlanders Charlie and Harold Taverner, one of Ben Taverner's sons working on the *Caribou*, dreaming about seeing the world and escaping Newfoundland's legacy of the defeat at Beaumont Hamel.<sup>4</sup> The act reaches its climax when *U-69* torpedoes the ferry under cover of night and panic breaks out in the ensuing blackout. The second act turns the play's mood into a catastrophe plot when the surviving characters gather in the only remaining lifeboat, braving the freezing wind and awaiting rescue from the Canadian minesweeper *Grandmère*, the priority of which is hunting the

attacking U-boat. Meanwhile, *U-69* hides below surface above the *Caribou's* wreck, the survivors above a shield against depth charges, and escapes undetected by the *Grandmère*. The play ends when the *Grandmère* gives up the pursuit and patrol planes drop flares to signal the *Grandmère* for the survivors' position. Throughout the play, war invades the characters' realities and pasts, but Major always keeps the characters' stories and emotions in view, carefully avoiding the melodramatic patriotism of the war drama.

The eclectic mix of characters is vital to establishing the primary cultural conflicts against the backdrop of the disaster. Major uses his fictional licence to portray the U-boat attack from several angles. The scenes outside the lounge shift the focal centre to give further insight into the events through soliloquies by Taverner, Gräf, and Cuthbert. By representing all three vessels in the *mise-en-scène* (*Lead Me Home* 149) and shifting between soliloquies, Major evokes the confined space at sea and the *Caribou's* defencelessness against an unknown threat while making the disaster's agents tangible. This rendering of an international conflict allows Major to redeem Cuthbert, who is torn in the play between duty and his wish to help the survivors. In reality, Cuthbert was long accused of supposedly mishandling both the escort mission and the rescue, and he seems to have been wrestling with the trauma of prioritizing the mission for the greater part of his life. Major also sketches out Gräf through soliloquies to his father. In the play, Gräf adores the German expressionist painter Franz Marc — despised by the Nazis — and hints at Gräf's own ambiguous stance towards following Hitler into war. Thus, Major gives the historical event a human touch; specifically avoiding the trope of an indistinct Nazi threat is a boon to the play. Much of this broader scope would be lost to the audience if Major chose to forgo dramatic irony to observe the unity of place by confining the audience's view to the *Caribou*. It is in these scenes that Major departs from focusing on Newfoundland and situates the disaster in a global context.

Known in the Canadian drama scene for adapting his historical novel, *No Man's Land* (1995), about the Battle of Beaumont Hamel for

stage, Major closely adheres to historical sources<sup>5</sup> to reconstruct the catastrophe of the *Caribou* for theatre. However, despite the play's historical core, Major assumes a certain fictional licence to elevate the play beyond mere enactment of known events. He predominantly populates the play with real — albeit fictionalized — characters involved in the disaster, like Bride and Captain Taverner; however, these characters mostly remain bystanders in the dramatic action. The central interpersonal conflict plays out between the fictional characters Charlie and Hank. More germanely for my purposes, Major also introduces the fictional musician and sailor Buzz, who rarely interacts with characters other than Hank and who functions in the play as the pianist who accompanies the singing in Act I in the lounge. Buzz perhaps best exemplifies Major's weaving together of the fictional and the historical when he removes Buzz and the piano in Act II, but fills the resulting musical void with a cappella singing to sustain the musical theme without violating the play's realism.

From the drafts of *Lead Me Home* it is clear that Major intended the play to have more musical-like elements, and that the music should profoundly impact the theme of power struggles and self-determination of Newfoundland. In the Breakwater publication we only see a remnant of Major's vision in the introduction. Up until the July 2009 draft *Lead Me Home* included an epilogue that underwent several changes in which, for example, Hank's actor is to remain on stage, playing the piano and recounting the events of the *Caribou* incident, commemorating the dead, and telling of Gräfs fate before launching into a final, slower chorus of "When the Lights Go On Again" ("The Kevin Major Collection" 2.07.001.003, p. 21). Major planned to have the lyrics of "When the Lights" printed on the theatre program so that the audience could join in, but that idea was deserted in subsequent drafts. Other changes would have Bride do the singing as Major presumably wanted to honour the sacrifice of the real Bride Fitzpatrick, who allegedly gave her place in a lifeboat to other passengers. Since "When the Lights" evokes the longing for an end to the war and, thus, to blackout regulations, concluding with this song again leads the audience

out of the play as the lights go on in the theatre, but the omission of this section is understandable for the sake of not trivializing the disaster and defeating the catharsis of the uncertain fate of Charlie and Newfoundland.

That Major sought to tackle the challenges of mounting an elaborate musical live performance bespeaks the aspiration to realism. The manifold exigencies of narrative and musical production render this play most ambitious and unique — yet they likewise proved to be its crux. Its many characters and songs require a large, versatile cast with highly specific skill sets. The many constraints that acting, singing, playing, and dancing put on creative possibilities appear to be important factors as to why the play only saw two summers. Already for 2010, some cast changes had to be made (for example, Buzz is still in the play, but Major introduces a new character, Irene Pearcey, the presumably fictional wife of Third Engineer Charles Pearcey on the *Caribou*, who does all the piano playing). Particularly, Buzz's role was a question mark as Donna Butt, director of Rising Tide Theatre, notes that she would not be “doing any of the big musical shows this year so there [would] be no Brian Way [Buzz's actor, an accomplished organist and pianist] — it is just too difficult to get him with his schedule in town. However we do need a piano player for lead [*sic*] *Me Home*” (“Re: April 14”). Additional financial complications made a play like *Lead Me Home* unworkable at Rising Tide, as Butt notes that the turnout was much smaller in 2010 than for the 2009 production, which saw an overwhelmingly positive turnout, and that she would have a smaller company in 2011 (“Re: Monday”). She also notes that subsequently she would be more cautious “about any show that requires a lot of really strong singers — we may not have enough good singers” (*ibid.*). Because of these complications, Major pondered whether to change the stage directions so that the music can alternatively be playback, eventually settling for the note in the final version that the music must be written and published before 1942 but without any other directions. The fact that Major and the cast braved these challenges renders the stage directions a tacit exhortation that live music is a crucial

dramatic and thematic vehicle for the play — one to which we must pay close attention.

In a play that so saliently features music and the culture embedded in it, who gets to sing is of central import to the play's power structure. Occupying the space around the piano with his eagerness to charm Margaret, Hank assumes the right to decide what is played. While the overarching political conflict that encompasses America, Canada, and Germany takes place outside the *Caribou* and to some degree offstage, the cultural conflict plays out inside, between Charlie and Hank. From their first interaction, Charlie mocks Hank's braggadocio when he responds to Margaret's affinity for the Texan accent with "Dat right? I finds 'em a bit hard to understand meself" (154). However, their quarrel is not merely a linguistic one, but takes on a physical dimension: Hank's voice and his ignorance of Newfoundland culture, as expressed in his pronunciation of "New-found-land" (150), agitates Charlie so much that he wants to get at Hank's throat (161) to "shut him up" (*ibid.*), not only in the sense of eliminating his competitor for Margaret but also of eliminating the American cultural presence that overpowers Newfoundland culture. Charlie's largely ineffective struggle for space to perform his own culture points both to his powerlessness and to how eagerly other Newfoundland characters embrace or at least tolerate American culture, thus giving it the power to claim this cultural space.

In the first act, swing-era tunes predominate and underscore the play's realism as the dance hall was perhaps the prime destination of military recreational life — especially for American soldiers in Newfoundland.<sup>6</sup> The songs also anchor the play in the cultural escapism of the early war years as they enable the transitory romances between Hank and Margaret, and Bride and RCAF pilot Archibald Jones (164). Major deftly draws the audience into the diegesis when Buzz enters the stage prior to the performance's beginning and starts playing Cole Porter's "Begin the Beguine" (1935), Sammy Fain and Irving Kahal's "I'll Be Seeing You" (1938), and Wingy Manone, Andy Razaf, and Joe Garland's "In the Mood" (1939). The play then fluidly



transitions into the action, drawing the audience into the light-hearted mood and preparing the survival plot. Major almost breaks the fourth wall here and establishes a sense of entering one of Newfoundland's dance halls during wartime when Buzz plays while the audience still finds its seats, as if it, too, embarks on the crossing. Music becomes more than extradiegetic diversion and evokes, specifically in an older audience, a nostalgic feeling of familiar songs and memories, immediately establishing a temporal and historical frame into which the audience settles.

The selection of songs supports the claim that the songs have an intradiegetic function and are subordinate to mood. The swing tunes are a conservative selection from the Great American Songbook, probably predominantly inspired by versions of the ubiquitous Glenn Miller. In this repertoire, "Begin the Beguine," Bennie Benjamin, Sol Marcus, and Ed Seiler's "When the Lights Go on Again" (1943), and Porter and Robert Fletcher's "Don't Fence Me In" (1934) stand out. Porter's original, notoriously complex version of "Begin the Beguine" contrasts the streamlined jazz vocabulary of the swing genre, so unless the production chose one of the later adapted versions, this song poses a thematic break. "When the Lights" is an anachronism in Major's diligently researched archive, as it was published in 1943 (Young and Young 230). Likewise, "Don't Fence Me In" remained largely forgotten as it was written for the unproduced film musical *Adios, Argentina*, and the film *Hollywood Canteen* revived it in 1944 (ibid. 45), so, although not anachronistic per se, it does not fit comfortably among the other songs, which were well established by 1942. We can therefore see that Major, despite the opening stage directions, uses the songs for specific effects<sup>7</sup> rather than prioritizing historical accuracy or a consistent musical theme — specifically because the choice of American songs probably appealed to an older Newfoundland audience that would have encountered most of these due to the American presence on the island between the 1940s and 1960s.

Despite the centrality of Newfoundland and local characters in *Lead Me Home*, Major includes, with "The Petty Harbour Bait Skiff,"

only one folksong that originated in Newfoundland, and otherwise draws on the English identity of Newfoundland music (McDonald) through "The Ryans and the Pittmans." Bride presents the latter (referring to the song by its alternative name, "We'll Rant and We'll Roar"), written by Henry W. Messurier around 1875 and adapted from the English shanty "Spanish Ladies," as Charlie's forte. Yet Hank denies the performance, which is significant because, between the two Newfoundland songs, "The Ryans" is the song with a nationalist character, so Hank undermines Charlie's resistance when the latter cannot perform the assertive, charmingly roisterous song. Instead, Charlie gives a rendition of John Grace's "Petty Harbour" (1852), which, as a disaster song, ironically foreshadows the *Caribou's* fate and frames the Newfoundlander as a vulnerable individual, tossed about by an indomitable sea. This denial of national identity points to the cultural subordination of Newfoundland and how American culture has a hold on Newfoundland's identity performance. Consequently, the other Newfoundland characters find Charlie's fighting spirit charming, but they are also wary of his uncertain future without the American presence.

However, we must resist the notion that the American military brought swing music to a musically isolated Newfoundland (Webb 118 ff.) — Major's argument certainly is more nuanced than that. Music historians often trace swing's origins to the dances of enslaved African Americans, a genre that white Americans — invading the African-American clubs of Harlem in the 1920s — appropriated from African Americans when whites developed an appetite for the unrestrained African-American dance styles that allowed whites to break out of repressive working-class and middle-class gender norms (Jones 233). Despite successful musicians like Duke Ellington and Earl Hines, racial segregation made it difficult for most black musicians to play in "white" venues or to be heard on the radio, and the emerging sound film industry popularized swing while either trivializing or erasing black musicianship on the screen (234) — a form of racial segregation American radio stations perpetuated in Newfoundland. Jeff A. Webb astutely shows how Newfoundlanders would be well

acquainted with swing by the time the Americans arrived: radio broadcasting began in Newfoundland in the 1920s (120), and the first secular radio station, The Voice of Newfoundland, quickly adopted jazz into its regular programming due to the genre's popularity (121). Yet Webb also shows that Newfoundlanders' reception of jazz was mixed. Some of his case studies indicate skepticism towards swing among Newfoundlanders; for example, the ineluctable moralist would voice his fear towards the radio station that an imagined sexual licentiousness of African-American dance styles would diffuse among young Newfoundlanders (126). However seriously we take such predictable sanctimony and in whichever way it really represents everyday life, when American culture came to Newfoundland through American soldiers, swing clearly was not a novelty but fell on well-prepared ground — whether to the delight or disdain of the locals.

With “A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square” (1939)<sup>8</sup> and “(There’ll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover” (1941), Major introduces two seemingly British songs that were not written in Britain, but are, to a certain degree, British-themed. Hank denies Jones the performance of Eric Maschwitz and Manning Sherwin’s “Nightingale,” so Bride sings Walter Kent and Nat Burton’s “Cliffs of Dover” in a way that “Vera Lynn herself could not do . . . any better,” as Archibald Jones remarks (162), so Major establishes a strong cultural connection to Britain. In the context of Canada’s quest for Newfoundland to join Confederation, it is striking that Jones demands “Nightingale” as “something a bit more sophisticated” (ibid.) than the swing tunes, indicating a sense of cultural superiority of the Commonwealth over America that remains unnoticed as they do not perform the song, and that Bride — the Newfoundland character who has spent extensive time in the States — dedicates “Cliffs of Dover” to “all the men of the RCAF aboard [the *Caribou*] tonight,” with Bateman adding the Royal Navy since “[t]here’s plenty o’ Newfoundlanders fighting alongside the Brits” (ibid.). Major deploys “White Cliffs” as a signifier of comradeship among Canadians, Newfoundlanders, and the British, yet despite the song’s resemblance of an English ballad through Vera

Lynn's subsequent popularization, it is an American war song (Young and Young 3) in the guise of a pacifist British littoral scene when bluebirds, a species endemic to North America ("Bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover"), populate a distinctly English landmark. Thus, despite the alliance of Canada and Newfoundland with Britain, America maintains a covert cultural dominance in song.

In Act II, the hymns invert the play's mood so that, at first glance, English culture seems to dominate. In the face of adversity in the lifeboat, the darkness of the early hours of 14 October, the exposure to the wind, and the suffering from wounds or shock, the survivors turn to religion to boost their morale. Again, the choice of songs is conservative, as William Whiting's "For Those in Peril on the Sea" (1860), more commonly known under the title "Eternal Father, Strong to Save," John Newton's "Amazing Grace" (1772), and Isaac Watts's "Our Help in Ages Past" (1708) are popular hymns. Hank's rendition of "Peace in the Valley" (1937), a gospel song composed by the African-American musician Thomas Dorsey and later picked up by white singers like Elvis Presley, as well as the German lullaby "Schlaf, Kindlein, Schlaf" and its English counterpart "Sleep, Baby, Sleep" stand out against these hymns. "Eternal Father" ambiguously connotes James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997), in which the song underscores the bourgeois privilege Jack must overcome to court Rose, whereas in *Lead Me Home* the song transcends class and — at least, momentarily — creates equality. Choosing this song also references the church service on the HMS *Prince of Wales* during the meeting between British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Ward and Burns 387) in which the two discussed the Atlantic Charter off the coast of Newfoundland in August 1941, which would eventually lead to the Leased Bases Agreement. While one might decode this instance, too, as a symbol of unification, it seems more convincing to read the meeting as a decisive moment when Newfoundland had no agency over its own territory. "Eternal Father" and the songs that depart from the religious archive complicate the refuge into Christianity so that this sombre form of escapism now does more than merely

sustain the survivors by deflating the younger characters' enthusiasm for war (cf. High 156) and presenting a pacifist message when Mrs. Shiers raises the issue of the collateral damage to the public once Allied forces would move into Europe (*Lead Me Home* 187–88).

The sexual and gender implications of dance hall music do not elude Major. It is significant that Hank's rendition of June Hershey and Don Swander's "Deep in the Heart of Texas" (1941) becomes the primal scene that stokes Charlie's jealousy and builds towards the clash between Hank and Charlie in Scene III. The song falls out of the swing archive both in terms of genre and complexity of composition as an example of Western swing,<sup>9</sup> thus springing from a markedly different source of African-American-influenced white music than Harlem jazz through the "old-timey" music craze of the Great Depression that paved the way for singing cowboys like Gene Autry. The song shores up Hank's imagined topographic and cultural connection to Margaret, who is from Saskatchewan, and it masculinizes Hank as the bravura country boy, connected to home with enough of a dash of urban culture to not disrupt his rural masculinity. The colonialism embedded in the song's pastoral clichés and the gendering of the landscape when "[t]he sage in bloom is like perfume" foreshadows Hank's sexual intent towards Margaret. Charlie's realization that she readily invites Hank's attention exacerbates his distaste for the American presence on Newfoundland. Thus, "Deep in the Heart" sparks a masculinized power struggle over culture.

Despite the play's realistic elements, we get the sense that the characters are more than sketches of individuals, and that Margaret feminizes Canada in this love triangle, in particular because her prairie background implies a rural naiveté and, perhaps, a lack of political agency due to the geopolitical remoteness from Ottawa and Quebec. Yet, as a Canadian Nursing Sister, Margaret is a more complex character than the play lets on at first. The elevation of the Canadian Nursing Sisters into relative rank gave rise to intersections of gender, class, and rank that young women had to navigate during their service time. The fact that these women not only occupied the roles of caretakers in the

war, but also, as Cynthia Toman shrewdly observes, entered a patriarchal military system in the dual role of officers and women by being "models of femininity, . . . companions and dance partners, . . . morale-boosters, and . . . a touch of home" (Toman 186) complicates Canada's feminization so that it performs a specific role in this situation. In Act II, Margaret orders the hierarchically subordinate Hank to aid Charlie, thus undermining the stereotype of the naive girl falling for the GI by performing her femininity for Hank. That Hank overconfidently takes this as an effect of his charms and the culture he touts points to a symbiotic connection between the States and Canada. Margaret entertains Hank to boost his performance as a protector of Newfoundland and, ultimately, Canada. Therefore, it is imperative for the reading of the role of the musician to understand the love triangle both literally and metonymically.

Driven by the lust for sexual adventure, Hank uses his swing repertoire to amplify his advances towards Margaret, and, in the process, becomes a silencing cultural force. He not only quickly cuts off Charlie, who performs "The Petty Harbour Bait Skiff," because to Hank the song is too "grim" and not "[p]arty-like" (*Lead Me Home* 156), but also dismisses Bride's attempt to defuse the escalating conflict between the two young men when she encourages Charlie to sing "We'll Rant and We'll Roar." Hank ponders sarcastically whether Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters would like to record the song (155), thus precluding any possibility of cultural transfer by granting musical merit only to mass culture and not to local performance, symbolizing the sway the American radio station Voice of the United States (Webb 132) held over Newfoundland listeners. I would argue that this deepens Charlie's animosity towards Hank when the former voices his annoyance to Lundrigan, a character with a similarly pronounced nationalist stance (155), that "[t]hey all likes the friggin' Andrews Sisters" (*ibid.*). Hank may be tolerated by the Canadian and Newfoundland characters, but Charlie actively resists Hank's cultural and sexual dominance.

It is true that Hank is emasculated when his sexual advances towards Margaret come to an abrupt end as Buzz has given away their

cabin (note that Hank is “slumped in a chair, dejected” [171]) and that Margaret, awakening from her stupor from losing her colleague Agnes, amplifies the homoerotic tension between Charlie and Hank when she asserts her superior rank and orders Hank to breathe into Charlie’s nose to keep the latter conscious (193–95). However, such a reading ignores how the erosion of Hank’s masculinity comes at the cost of Charlie coming close to death. Without American culture driven by aggressive male sexuality as the sustaining life force, Newfoundland culture becomes endangered, even potentially forgotten. As Bateman tellingly remarks, Hank’s “hot air” is exactly what keeps Charlie alive in the lifeboat, and the group’s neglect of him when they try to catch the attention of the patrol planes leaves his fate in a limbo at the end when “[h]e may be dead. Nothing is certain” (198). Charlie is the character who depends most on American culture despite him being the only one who actively resists it. Charlie’s enmity towards America and his eagerness to embrace looming Confederation by joining the Royal Air Force (171) starkly contrasts Newfoundlanders’ benevolence towards Americans, particularly after the Destroyers for Bases Agreement of 1940, after which America gave Britain 43 destroyers and Canada seven destroyers in exchange for 99-year land leases in Newfoundland, Bermuda, and Antigua, among other countries (Hull). The subsequent Leased Bases Agreement (1941) brought not only the American military, but also—so the dominant narrative goes, in spite of the military target Newfoundland became through this occupation<sup>10</sup>—wealth and prosperity to Newfoundland. In contrast, the Canadians in public memory were met largely with suspicion before and bitterness after Confederation.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Charlie has little agency in this cultural struggle, particularly because America and Canada seem to be assuming a symbiotic relationship in their occupation of Newfoundland.

The function of nationality is key for understanding why Charlie targets Hank’s masculinity. Several times in the play, other characters tell Charlie that Margaret is “not his type” (e.g., *Lead Me Home* 167), suggesting that a union with a seemingly meek, feminized Canada

would not make him happy. Although Charlie realizes that he has no chance with her, he attacks Hank's masculinity when he jeers, "If you can't get a man, get a Yank" (161), to which Hank immediately reacts, surprised that "Newfs [are] sore losers" (ibid.). The amicable disposition of many Newfoundlanders towards the American presence on the island hardly requires elaboration.<sup>12</sup> Karl M. Earle observes a cultural kinship between Newfoundlanders and New Englanders beyond the "Boston states" nostrum because Newfoundlanders felt culturally connected to the coastal New England region — states that strongly relied on the fishing industry and were also impacted by the cod moratorium in the 1990s (14). Again, we get the impression that specifically Charlie functions as a synecdoche — we should be reminded here of Harold Taverner's characterization that Charlie is "always pretty good at pickin' fights. But never very good at finishing them off" (173) — when he does not feel this kinship and sees Hank, whom he perceives as a "Yankee," as an invader, but simultaneously has an unrequited interest in feminized Canada personified in Margaret. Given his eagerness to join the Canadian forces, Charlie presumably envisions a more permanent relationship with Margaret and sees Hank as an intruder who would just use Margaret for his own temporary desires. In contrast, Margaret shows little interest in Charlie, even patronizes him to some degree when he becomes brawly, so he is torn between what he wants but what he cannot get and what Britain imposes on him and what he cannot get rid of. Therefore, all Newfoundland can do is to subvert American culture to prevent its dominance.

Despite Charlie's obsession to frame Hank as an overbearing "Yankee," Hank resists this conflation of identity by incessantly emphasizing his distinct Texan identity. However, he is not a descendant of the Southern plantocracy. His pseudo-sophisticated demeanour and his lack of empathy for "Petty Harbour" renders him upwardly mobile in the sense that he tries to mask an urban upbringing by claiming the prairies as his home and boasting of the possibilities of Texan capitalism during the oil boom. He also exaggerates his cultural education when he suavely deflects Jones's call that there has



been “[e]nough of that dance-hall razzmatazz” (162) and that it is time for “A Nightingale Sang in Barkeley Square” by deprecating the song’s popularity when he quips: “Try me again, Churchill” (162). In a sense, Hank is more removed from Newfoundland culture than Gräf, who, as a submariner, praises the “infinite dignity of [Newfoundland’s] cliffs” that leaves him “speechless” (174). Similarly, as a sailor, Buzz is closer to Charlie’s culture and could empathize with the struggles of maritime societies. Since Hank draws on a generalized American culture to cloak his own background, Charlie feels the need to gain authority in a space that he deems should be under his control. He rejects American materialism when he sneers at the Andrews Sisters’ popularity and refuses to drink cola — “battery acid,” he calls it (155) — and mocks Hank when the latter’s can opener is not needed because the lifeboat’s emergency kit comes equipped with one of its own (184). The more Hank tries to push American culture onto the Newfoundlanders, the more Charlie draws on the stereotype of the “Yankee” to erode the sense of cultural dependence by showing that Newfoundland can provide for itself.

Charlie’s moment finally comes in the lifeboat when the mood of the play becomes more sinister and the swing songs are replaced by Christian hymns. Mrs. Shiers has lost all of her children in the aftermath of the attack except her youngest, Leonard, and is pregnant with another child. When prompted, Hank is unable to console her with a song:

CHARLIE: You must know some hymns. You’re not a friggin’ heathen are you, Hank? This is no time to be a heathen.

HANK begins to sing, tentatively at first, “Peace in the Valley.”

[CHARLIE:] Dat’s not a hymn. Dis is not a friggin’ valley, Hank. It’s the bloody Atlantic Ocean! (181)

Now the power relations briefly shift to Charlie and he can deny Hank’s rendition of “Peace in the Valley” because, to Charlie, it does not suit either the location or the situation, just like “Petty Harbour”

did not fit into the festive mood for Hank. If we truly take Hank as a man of the prairies, then he is culturally ill-equipped for a catastrophe and being lost at sea, so now it is the Newfoundlanders' time to assume the culturally dominant position, as much of the culture revolves around braving the sea and finding recourse in religion. While one can argue that religion unites the survivors when Charlie and Hank sing "Amazing Grace" together and that it deflates the younger characters' eagerness for war, this reading falls short of how it allows Hank to restore his position when, after he saves Charlie from losing consciousness, he returns to his neo-colonial project and wants to teach Charlie "how to think big" in Texas (195). Charlie's triumph over Hank is therefore short-lived, and the cultural fate of Newfoundland remains uncertain in the end when Charlie may or may not be dead.

In light of Charlie framing Hank as the cultural intruder, Charlie chiefly ignores Buzz, the only "Yankee" of the play — at least from a geographical perspective. Charlie's antipathy towards America does not extend to Buzz, with whom he only once indirectly interacts when he asks Hank: "You Texas fellows any good on the fiddle? Maybe you wants to try yer hand at the accordion?" (156). He displays a similar ignorance that Hank shows towards Newfoundland folk music when his second-person plural ambiguously casts Buzz as a Texan — although Buzz states *in absentia* of Charlie that he is from New Jersey (150) — and appears ignorant of the distinct Texan fiddling styles with roots in Appalachian folk music. Yet the ostensible cultural connection between the Newfoundland steward and the east-coast sailor does not manifest in interaction. There is a divide between Charlie and Buzz that denies cultural interaction, as Charlie clearly is alienated from the piano, an instrument that only through the rising consumer culture at the turn of the century found its way out of North American middle-class parlours (Roell 32).<sup>13</sup> In contrast, coded as working-class instruments, the fiddle and the accordion grant Charlie a mobility and spontaneity to perform music, whereas the premeditated, perhaps even scholastic approach to music through the piano and harmonically

complex jazz tunes alienates him — in short: in his musical world, Charlie cannot make sense of Buzz.

However, the intersections of gender and class in these musical approaches that socially isolate Buzz do not per se feminize Buzz, who is spatially confined to the piano, but we certainly note a homosocial dependence of Hank towards Buzz so that Hank can maintain his cultural dominance. Buzz assumes a subservient role to Hank as, aside from a few pieces of dialogue, he mutely follows Hank's lead and does not meaningfully communicate with others on stage. This homosocial relationship may even have a homoerotic component, as Buzz is markedly desexualized and exhibits no interest in the women on the boat and relinquishes his and Hank's cabin to Mrs. Shiers (170), as if to sabotage Hank's fling with Margaret. Charlie cannot understand this bond between the two Americans and, thus, is suspicious of Hank romancing Margaret. Musical performance corroborates the idea of homoeroticism when Hank's fragile masculinity denies him a connection to the piano and, without Buzz, he attempts to play "Moonlight Serenade" by himself and remains "without much success" (167). Hank is completely lost without musical accompaniment when the survivors expect him to sing, as war has expunged femininity from the play when Buzz disappears and Margaret is first traumatized by the submarine attack, then disillusioned with wartime love, and finally embraces her masculine role as an officer. In Newfoundland, Buzz's feminine quality as a musician catering to a masculine singer cannot be replaced.

Major's earlier drafts of the play bear witness to a complex affinity between space and music that isolate the musician. Initially, Buzz did not exist and Hank's actor would have to fulfill the dual role of singer and musician. Thus, Major created Buzz out of the need to separate singing and acting from playing the piano. The drafts reveal how Buzz is subordinated to Hank when the embodiment of both roles in Hank undermines his potential for cultural dominance. From these early drafts, Major's handwritten notes suggest that, from the beginning, he envisioned a "U.S. Serviceman" from Texas, as Major already lists "Deep in the Heart," whereas he later selects, from the feedback of

director Donna Butt, other swing-era songs.<sup>14</sup> Major does not introduce Buzz (2.07.001.007) until the April 2008 draft, particularly out of practical considerations that the company would have to cast both a good singer and, due to the jazz roots of swing, an equally sophisticated piano player in addition to the acting. Presumably, as a combination of both would further constrain the production's possibilities, the need to separate the role into acting and instrumentalism was inevitable.

This solution may seem mostly pragmatic at first, but it profoundly impacts Hank's stage presence. Before that point, Hank is the dedicated piano player, which is limiting to his interaction with other characters. The introduction of the summer 2008 draft reads: "*About ten minutes before the play is due to start, a young man, Hank Scheller, Corporal, US Army Air Corps enters and seats himself at the piano*" (2.07.001.002).<sup>15</sup> Because the conflict with Charlie is already sketched out, Major realizes the problem that Hank would not be able to dominate centre stage both through music and space when he sits at the piano for the most part. After all, in the published version, Hank is free to move around and, upon Charlie's provocation, can immediately turn to him during Mack Gordon and Harry Warren's "Chattanooga Choo Choo" (1941). The scene loses the implication of toxic masculinity when Hank "turns to [Charlie] as he finishes playing" (2.07.001.002 p.4), suggesting that the actor would, first, have to finish playing, and, second, stand up to face Charlie. In order to sustain the conflict between Charlie and Hank over masculine dominance, Major needed Hank to compete with Charlie for the dramatic space, so the practical split between the singer and the musician also has narrative ramifications when it intensifies the conflict and represents cultural American dominance spatially.

Approaching the premiere, Major also attempted to write a song for the leitmotif of joining up for the war by writing the eponymous song "Lead Me Home,"<sup>16</sup> presumably inspired by the fourth line of the second stanza of "Amazing Grace," with the help of actors Petrina Bromley and Brian Way (Major "coming out to Trinity"). The Breakwater publication only retained Charlie and Harold's incantation in Act I, Scene V:

CHARLIE: Like we couldn't wait to be going, too.

CHARLIE & HAROLD: (singing) I'm setting out,  
across the wildest water  
Setting out, from this native shore  
I'm setting out, over deep uncharted ocean  
For a far-off world at war  
A far-off world at war. (173)

The full lyrics went through several revisions until this stanza in the Breakwater edition, but the following version perhaps comes closest to the above:

[Chorus]  
We're setting out  
Across the wildest water  
We're setting out  
over deep uncharted ocean  
leaving behind  
the land that is our homeland  
for an unknown world at war  
an unknown world at peace

HAROLD TAVERNER: (singing)  
We are sons set to wonder  
To cast ourselves adrift  
Though it is our fathers' promise,  
That home's never far away  
[repeats Chorus]

TOGETHER: [i.e., Charlie and Harold]  
Now we follow our own footsteps  
man for man  
our fathers' equal  
captains all our own  
We're setting out  
Across the wildest water

We're setting out  
Over deep uncharted ocean  
Flying out  
From the land that is our homeland  
For an unknown world at war  
an unknown world at peace

Until the day we have the notion  
that the time is past to wonder [*sic*]  
across the wildest water  
over deep uncharted ocean  
time finally to find  
the land that is our homeland  
an unknown world at peace  
an unknown world at peace

Lead me home.

In the 7 July 2009 second draft (2.07.001.017), Charlie also sings a final stanza in the epilogue that was exchanged for "When the Lights Go On Again" on 30 July:

Some day I'll turn back across the water  
Turn back, to my native shore  
Some day I'll turn back across the ocean . . . (fading out)  
. . .  
. . . turn back across the ocean  
From a world no more at war  
A world no more at war  
Listen, the battles cease  
At the [*sic*] last there is peace.

(There is a brief look between Charlie and Hank, one of understated reconciliation.)

(Lights down)

To reiterate, the preserved passage of the song points to the eagerness of the young Newfoundlanders to make a mark on the world themselves, but the truncated lyrics show that, unlike the United States, they do not aspire to a neo-colonial project and that, once the war is over and the young men have sufficiently explored the world, they would return to a home that is safe and that they would develop with their own labour. Consequently, the song suggests that Newfoundland has decidedly different aspirations for the war effort in terms of proving its international importance and establishing its independent identity. However, the uncertain fate of Charlie and his decision — that “[s]omeone needs to be aboard the next ferry. To tell people what a good woman [Bride] was. I can’t have her forgotten” (194) — calls into question the possibility of asserting this Newfoundland independence overseas when the possibility of another Beaumont Hamel in Europe alarms Charlie and he, at least, considers prioritizing the community over personal adventure. Instead of revering Americans or the British, Charlie’s anagnorisis foreshadows the erasure of African-American music culture when he realizes that commemorating great contributions to a culture and fostering this selfsame culture must take precedence over becoming complicit in a greater neo-colonial scheme.

Hank not only becomes a synecdoche for an emerging American cultural neo-colonialism as he croons and dances over the stage, but he also embodies the cultural appropriation of the American music industry. Robert Springer shows, with the example of African-American blues musicians, how the industry systematically exploited black musicianship — whether by creating a legal copyright system ill-fitted for a form of musical performance rooted in folkloristic reinterpretation (38 ff.), by exploiting a marginalized people’s illiteracy of this legal system (39), or by methodically stealing musicians’ intellectual property *à la* Perry Bradford and Clarence Williams (*ibid.*). With the popularization of swing and the emerging cultural escapism when America entered World War II, swing mutated from a form of black artistic expression to, as Carlos Jones puts it in connection to swing

dance, a "skewed version of information passed through a filter of limited perspective. . . . [T]he movement vocabulary, aesthetic sensibility, and cultural understanding of [African-American culture] were gradually and systematically being diluted, recast, or expunged" (234). At the apex of the swing craze, few people would remember ragtime pioneers like James Reese Europe (Gilbert 219), as white musicians had safely entrenched themselves in the industry with the aid of Jim Crow segregation. As Fredric Jameson argues, individual experience — unrepresentable as it becomes through cultural globalization — is subordinate to a cultural imperialism "that determines the very quality of the individual's subjective life" (411). Therefore, Hank, with the combined cultural arsenal of song and dance, represents the late-capitalist logic of the American music industry that seeks not the representation of African-American experiences in music, but its exploitation and reproduction for a cultural economy with entertainment as its teleology.

### **"You Know What I Want to Hear": *Casablanca* and *Lifeboat* as Intertexts**

With this function of cultural imperialism in mind, we can now delve further into the archival material to understand how racial ambiguity enters the social hierarchy of Hank and Buzz. The play has two central intertexts<sup>17</sup> — Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942), based on Murray Burnett and Joan Alison's unproduced play *Everybody Comes to Rick's* (1940), and Alfred Hitchcock's adaptation of the eponymous John Steinbeck novella *Lifeboat* (1944). Both intertexts, while discernible in the published version, are more pronounced in the drafts and expose the nature of Buzz's social isolation.

As already noted, the selection of songs underwent some change throughout the play's drafts;<sup>18</sup> specifically, it included Herman Hupfeld's "As Time Goes By" (1931), the oft-quoted leitmotif of *Casablanca*. While the song certainly was popular before *Casablanca*, it is safe to assume that Major, an avid watcher of classical Hollywood



cinema, had the song's narrative function in the film in mind when he deployed it. *Bride* mirrors Ilsa Lund's affinity for "As Time Goes By" when "I'll Be Seeing You" evokes in her a similar nostalgia for New York and compels her to sing along. More germanely, Buzz assumes the role of Dooley Wilson's character Sam when Buzz obliges any song request — note how the piano in *Casablanca* is both movable and takes a central part in the diegesis as a secret stash, so the piano on the *Caribou*, too, takes a role in the narrative when Hank and Margaret sit at the piano in Act I, Scene V and then leave for the failed consummation of their love affair. Likewise, Hank is modelled on Rick in terms of his spatial assertiveness and his insouciant approach to love in times of war. The character of Sam himself becomes a minstrelsy figure when he is unquestioningly devoted to Rick despite job offers that would earn him a better salary in a safer environment, which should remind us of Saidiya V. Hartman's notion of entertainment as buttressing white supremacy by framing the black body as unconscious of violence as "[s]ongs, jokes, and dance transform wretched conditions into a conspicuous, and apparently convincing [that is, convincing to the white gaze], display of contentment" (35). The key scene for my purpose is when Sam, realizing that he cannot reason with his boss, starts to play "a little something of [his] own," and Rick cuts him off with "Well, stop it. You know what I want to hear," that is, "As Time Goes By." We see a similar constellation in how Hank has a hold on Buzz. As Sam fades from the narrative before the film's denouement, so, despite both soldiers sleeping in the lobby when the torpedo hits, Hank uncannily survives while Buzz does not. Even in the published version, this resonance with *Casablanca* links Buzz and Sam and renders the piano a crime scene of racial injustice.

The debt to *Casablanca* goes further than the adaptation of character types. Rick's Café Américain and the *Caribou* lounge are similar spaces in which military and civilian patrons lose themselves in entertainment to escape the war. Despite the outwardly escapist entertainment of music and drinks, both are locales of political conflict, and music is at the heart of these sites. In *Casablanca*, Victor Laszlo rushes

off to make the band play the "Marseillaise" to drown out the Nazi soldiers' performance of "Die Wacht am Rhein." Like the guests slowly join into the "Marseillaise," it takes a catastrophe like the *Caribou* incident for the survivors to find unity in religion against German aggression. However, I would argue that the central conflict of *Lead Me Home* is not one between Allied and Axis forces. Despite his euphoria at sinking an enemy ship, Gräf is not a zealous patriot. Through his auto-characterization that his art would be considered *entartet* among ardent Nazi circles and through his humanization when his "Schlaf, Kindlein, Schlaf" doubles the parental anxieties during wartime represented in Mrs. Shiers's "Sleep, Baby, Sleep," he remains ambiguous in his loyalty to the Third Reich. The lounge — and, more precisely, the piano as a space of racial injustice — are at the centre of the cultural power struggle among American, Newfoundland, and Canadian cultures.

In turn, Hitchcock's *Lifeboat* is significant for *Lead Me Home* in terms of the film's use of space that reflects a "racial hierarchy." Grappling with the challenge of how to make all actors in the lifeboat visible to the audience<sup>19</sup> — particularly those lying down like Charlie and Margaret — Major names *Lifeboat* as an inspiration, as Hitchcock had to employ unusual camera angles to fit so many actors into a single shot without filming outside the boat ("the lifeboat, Hitchcock's film" and "in the mail to you"). Major's vision of realism not only compelled him to be very deliberate about space for the audience's experience, but it also required him to make every character present in order to achieve the new sense of unity in disaster. However, the function of space in *Lifeboat* immediately impacts the film's racism. Like *Casablanca*, *Lifeboat* also features an African-American character: Joe Spencer, played by Canada Lee — like Dooley Wilson, a musician. Joe is a minor character, yet he, again, primarily exists for the music when he plays the tin whistle for the survivors' amusement. They exhort him to keep playing, and often demand of him to play in a particular style, at that, thus reproducing the racism of white expectations of black musicianship.<sup>20</sup> It is Joe's only role to play the tin whistle, and the Nazi U-boat

commander Willi makes him play along to German songs, which only exacerbates the white-supremacy theme of *Lifeboat* as he uses Joe and music to distract the survivors while attempting to deliver them into the hands of the Germans. Thus, the black musician is additionally “othered” when he is tricked into complicity with the enemy.

The intersection of class in the musical divide between Charlie and Buzz and the racial function of music in these intertexts racialize the dramatic space, as Buzz is mostly confined to the piano. Further, the racial implications of space exacerbate the idea of cultural erasure when Major sacrifices the piano and harmonic accompaniment in order to limit dramatic space<sup>21</sup> in Act II. Buzz is presumably dead in Act II, but the racial ambiguity of the musician still operates in the play, making Buzz a ghostly presence in the survivors’ singing. While Hank did not use his voice sparingly in Act I, he now seems helpless without Buzz’s accompaniment. We get a sense of apprehension that overcomes Hank when only he survives the suction of the sinking ship. When others ask him to sing a song, he seems uncomfortable with the role that Buzz previously occupied, primarily because it forces Hank into the role of musical servility, a position he has all the while sought to avoid by marshalling American culture wherever he can convert people. We get the feeling that Hank mourns the loss of Buzz, but what he mourns is the servile musician, not the musical heritage that has been lost.

Buzz as a white musician playing in black style in the racialized space of the piano is a subtler form of blackface that affirms white supremacy when the white singer is the focus of the performance and the musician reinforces this performance. Certainly, the very notion of “authentic” black musicianship is a complex simulacrum. On the case study of comparing Otis Redding’s 1966 rendition of Reg Connelly, Harry Woods, and James Campbell’s “Try a Little Tenderness” (1932) to versions of white performers, Rob Bowman calls attention to the essentialist notions that discern a distinct Euro-American mode of performance where lyrics govern a song’s meaning and an African-American mode of performance where sound primarily conveys

meaning (127). Redding exemplifies this style by utilizing timbre, dynamics, and improvisation to interpret and adapt (126) the material to the point where one might readily believe that he wrote the song instead of covering a white Tin Pan Alley standard. In turn, David Gilbert shows that African-American artists played with white expectations of "authentic" black performance. For example, vaudeville artists like Bob Cole, James Weldon Johnson, and John Rosamond Johnson attempted to reappropriate racist minstrelsy routines to promote their own work as a way to accustom white audiences to black performers (64). Debatable as the anti-racist effect of such reappropriation may be, early vaudeville and ragtime bolstered the durable notion of an essentialized black style. Thus, the simulacrum of a black style of music exacerbates Buzz's racial ambiguity and subordinates the social position of the musician, as in music the lines of racial authorship increasingly blur.

This unsettling quality of mixed musical styles renders Buzz's racial identity ambiguous. The creation of Buzz raises the question as to what kind of musician Buzz is and in what way he differs from Hank. Notably, in early drafts Hank enters and starts playing from memory,<sup>22</sup> which calls attention to two important details. First, playing without sheet music not only strengthens the impression that Hank is closer to an entertainer like Dean Martin, who plays a fixed and rehearsed repertoire and whose musical skills are limited outside of that. Second, and this also applies to the published version of the play, playing from memory anchors the performance in the now, adumbrating the musical legacy of the composers. In contrast, Buzz in the final draft enters "sheet music in hand" (150). In this context, using sheet music signifies a more professional form of musicianship since the sheets suggest that he has a much larger repertoire to draw from spontaneously, leaving open the possibility of improvisation. In a later draft, he even figures out "Lead Me Home" while Charlie and Harold sing and then accompanies them. The sheet music also leaves open the choices of how much one draws on past musical achievements and how far one confers upon it one's own experience. Although the majority

of Major's musical archive features white composers, Buzz's performance is marked by black jazz roots as he has abundant room for improvisation within the songs. To reiterate, the play leaves little doubt that Buzz is white — "Buzz" being a predominantly white male nickname and the racial segregation in the U.S. Army making an African-American passenger unlikely even if we ignore the ship's manifest (Morgan). However, as he engages in black styles of performance, he becomes a racially ambiguous figure in this racially charged space.

Despite Buzz's presumed whiteness, this servility to Hank as well as the performance of a white repertoire appropriated from African-American music in a markedly Newfoundland space draws Newfoundland into the force field of American racism. Although the play rarely, and only in the context of the Holocaust, addresses race, we ought to go beyond the bromide of a Newfoundland hospitality devoid of racism that the popularity of Lanier Phillips's survival story of the shipwreck of the USS *Truxtun*<sup>23</sup> lodged on the banks of Newfoundland cultural self-perception. Steven High notes that the Newfoundland government was opposed to the States bringing African-American soldiers to the island — the few that were to be stationed there were generally a rare sight in St. John's — and that 80 African-American navy personnel, who were stationed at Argentia, were excluded from most social activities because "Jim Crow segregation had taken hold in neighbouring Placentia" (167). Specifically, Hank's ominous phrasing of Buzz being "happier than a coondog on a bare leg" when playing the piano (*Lead Me Home* 150) — the connotation of coonhounds being used to track fugitive enslaved people should not be lost on us here — invests Buzz with a lingering Africanist presence (Morrison 6)<sup>24</sup> that points to the isolated minority of African-American soldiers in Newfoundland and the repression of African Americans in the American music industry. Therefore, that the Newfoundland characters entertain Hank's antics and even enjoy them renders these characters complicit in the marginalizing practices of the American music industry, which, in turn, buttresses an overarching system of white supremacy.

The songs in the play, whether swing songs or hymns, have in common that they painstakingly avoid addressing conflict, taking flight into, for example, the train-riding banalities of "Chattanooga." Thus, by reconciling, Hank and Charlie tacitly realize that both the war and the exploitation of black culture, "American Coca-Cola . . . mixed with . . . good Newfoundland rum" as Hank proposes (161), are necessary to sustain their own social superiority. Newfoundland was complicit in the exploitation of people of colour when it banned Bermuda fishermen from the Grand Banks fishery in the late eighteenth century — the enslaved people having allegedly become just as adept at fishing as Newfoundlanders (Prowse 345 ff.) — while securing the economic privilege to sell that fish to the West Indies in exchange for rum. In the twentieth-century it also furthered the racist practices of the American music industry by embracing the culture-erasing practices of late capitalism. Despite the seemingly levelled social hierarchy in the lifeboat, Hank secures white cultural supremacy when he adapts to another musical genre — singing "Amazing Grace" with Charlie — that does not need the musician to expand cultural control, and, consequently, Buzz immediately fades into memory, which expunges the racial ambiguity of music from white performance.

## Conclusion

Despite the theme of unity in adversity, Major shrewdly resists the trope of music as a socially uniting practice and shows how it can upset power relations between cultures, pointing to the inherent instability of national identity when American culture is built on a legacy of exploitation of marginalized peoples. By eliminating Buzz from the play, Major does not erase African-American culture, but emphasizes the music industry's ways of exploiting and truncating black musical achievements.<sup>25</sup> While on one level commemorating the victims, Major does not use the sinking of the *Caribou* as an international disaster to join in on the moral binaries of World War II or to frame Newfoundland through Charlie as a country coming of age when it

becomes the site of global conflicts. More pertinently, he draws attention to how neo-colonial practices harm societies on a cultural level, whether in the form of a war-powered late capitalism erasing African-American culture by appropriating it for profit or in an American neo-colonial project of entering World War II, resulting in German U-boat attacks that decimated small communities like Port aux Basques. More than a testament of Newfoundland pulling its own weight in a world under the duress of war, Major shows how Newfoundland's culture was durably altered when Newfoundland, charmed by the economic boost the arrival of American troops brought, readily took up American neo-colonial practices, which, in turn, still occludes Newfoundland's own racist legacies.

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## Notes

- 1 Drawing to a great extent on the play, Major expands on this strategy in the play's novelization *Land Beyond the Sea* (2019), which continues the narrative until the sinking of *U-69* in February 1943, making John, the novel's slightly more mature version of Charlie, the protagonist that sets out to avenge the victims of the *Caribou* disaster. The comparatively large number of characters in *Lead Me Home* — problematic as it is in many ways for the play — is necessary in the novel to retain

- the degree of realism Major envisions while allowing him to take this more novelistic approach to narrating a complex event like the sinking of the *Caribou*. While Major still applies music in *Land Beyond the Sea*, it does not remotely take as central a place as in *Lead Me Home*.
- 2 In terms of fictional narratives about the *Caribou*, Major's play falls between Cassie Brown's short story "The Caribou Disaster" (1996) and Jennifer Morgan's children's comic book *Almost Home: The Sinking of the S.S. Caribou* (2012). The former only fragmentally recounts the events on the *Caribou* due to Brown "not receiving the cooperation and information to develop the story as she wished" (Brown xi); the latter, appearing in a period of renewed public interest in the *Caribou* around the disaster's seventieth anniversary, leans on Major's portrayal of Captain Taverner to explore the character of Morgan's great-grandfather Thomas Moyst, Second Engineer, one of the 137 victims of the attack. Of the three fictionalized representations, Major's play is the most extensively researched, the narrative most governed by historical events, yet also the most fictionalized.
  - 3 In the play, Gräf incorrectly bears the title of Kapitänleutnant, to which he would not be promoted before 1943 — a detail Major rectifies in *Land Beyond the Sea*.
  - 4 *No Man's Land* was a central piece of Rising Tide Theatre's repertoire until 2017.
  - 5 Presumably, Major relied on historical sources, such as William Lundrigan's ("The Lundrigan Story") and Alex Bateman's (Granatstein and Hillmer) accounts, and on new information, such as naval documents that became accessible around 2007 (cf. Sarty). Among other details, Major overtly shows Canadian naval command's strategic error to have the escort ship follow the *Caribou* instead of vice versa, thus additionally hindering the escort to detect enemy vessels with inferior equipment, and implicitly tells in stage directions how the German U-boat commander both misidentified the ships and miscalculated the time to the torpedo's detonation.
  - 6 See Cardoulis's survey of popular dance hall locations like the Caribou Hut in St. John's and the Red Rose Club in Stephenville (164–65). Although Major missed the apogee of the American presence in Newfoundland, noting the influence of growing up near the Harmon

- Field air base in Stephenville is hardly a stretch of the imagination.
- 7 Drafts of the play include lyrics for all songs, but out of copyright considerations Major decided to only print lyrics in the Breakwater publication that were in the public domain, like "The Petty Harbour Bait Skiff" and the hymns in Act II ("Lead Me Home" e-mail to Denyse Lynde).
- 8 Major uses the rarer alternative spelling "Barkeley."
- 9 I am indebted to my first referee for pointing out this distinction to me.
- 10 Roger Sarty notes that "Canada's apparent defeat in the St. Lawrence was the result of effective defences which drove U-69 and other German submarines from the gulf" (210).
- 11 James Overton notes that the American military spent about \$1.1 billion (110) on defence operations in Newfoundland; furthermore, John N. Cardoulis explains that the construction and operation of military installations employed over 20,000 Newfoundlanders (154) with much better wages than either the Newfoundland government or the Canadian forces would allow (High 188). However, High also challenges nationalist historiography that produced the stereotype of the despised Canadian soldier, and gives several examples in which Canadians were just as warmly received as Americans (154 ff.).
- 12 Two obvious examples are the "Yank Come Back" campaign organized by the town of Stephenville in 1988 (Harmon Field was converted for civilian use in 1966) in which ex-soldiers returned to Newfoundland for the celebrations and the American Air Force did an air show (e.g., Cardoulis 171), and the Newfoundlanders' hospitality towards stranded passengers when Operation Yellow Ribbon diverted 38 planes to Gander in response to the 9/11 attacks.
- 13 I am indebted to my second referee for calling this to my attention.
- 14 From the e-mail correspondence we can see how Butt took charge in several important decisions, for example, when she suggests that "maybe Hank can join in the singing — if for no other reason that the actor [Michael Peddle] has a great voice" (2.07.001.001, p. 16).
- 15 Note that Major dropped the last name in later drafts and the published version. On the *Caribou*, there was an American corporal with the name F.J. Scheller, but, according to Jennifer Lee Morgan's

- reconstructed manifest, he was in the Navy, not the Air Force. Further, there was no ship steward that would fit Charlie's or John's profile either in terms of provenance or age. Likewise, there is no American sailor with the last name "Busby" that Hank calls Buzz (170).
- 16 The play received the title in an undated draft sometime between October 2008 and the March/April 2009 draft (see 2.07.001.005). Prior to that draft, the working title was "Caribou 1942."
  - 17 Major also notes Wolfgang Petersen's U-boat movie *Das Boot* (1981) as an inspiration for Gräf's passages, yet I opted for omitting its discussion in this article on the grounds that it does not primarily pertain to my discussion of race and that its influence is much more pronounced in *Land Beyond the Sea*.
  - 18 For example, the three expository songs initially comprised "I'll Be Seeing You," Miller's "A String of Pearls" (1941), and Ross Parker and Hughie Charles's "We'll Meet Again" (1939), which significantly mellows the mood of the play's opening when two ballads couch the more upbeat "String" (2.07.001.002). Earlier drafts also included the American hymn "Will Your Anchor Hold" (1882) by Priscilla Jane Owens (e.g., 2.07.001.017, p. 41).
  - 19 Major notes: "Notice how there is a platform all the way around the interior of the boat, and gives people lots of places to sit down" ("in the mail to you").
  - 20 Famously, Steinbeck tried to distance himself from the movie. As Thomas Barden points out, Steinbeck was distinctly flirtatious with white supremacy in *Lifeboat*, but Jo Swirling's screenplay, which the latter derived from Steinbeck's novella and earlier film script, made many alterations and distorted Steinbeck's story (cf. Barden 178) so far that the latter wanted to have his name removed from any connection with the movie. As Steinbeck wrote to 20th Century Fox: "[I]t is not true that in that script as in the film there were any slurs against organized labor nor was there a stock comedy Negro. . . . And instead of the usual colored travesty of the half comic and half pathetic Negro there was a Negro of dignity, purpose and personality" (177–78).
  - 21 We are reminded here of Berni Stapleton facing a similar challenge with *A Rum for the Money* (2008) when the mysterious vessel hits the rumrunners' boat at night.

- 22 One might argue that Hank receives an air of true sophistication when he quietly seats himself to play the piano. However, the image of the musician engrossed in playing not only starkly contrasts his Texan *couleur* and overbearing manner, but it also feminizes him to a certain degree. The soldier willing to brawl with another man for a love interest squares poorly with the sophistication of the musician when Hank would risk endangering his hands, which he must protect in order to be able to play the demanding extended harmonies of jazz chords. It seems clear that the musician had to be split from the singer at the expense of his musical skills as Hank in the published version has little success at the piano, which ultimately stabilizes Hank's racial identity and, consequently, also his masculinity.
- 23 See Robert Chafe's *Oil and Water* as a chief expression of this notion of Newfoundland untainted by racist practices.
- 24 It is highly significant that Hank and Charlie reconcile over "Amazing Grace," perhaps one of the most morally ambiguous but also most popular hymns. Newton, a slave trader-turned-abolitionist, wrote the hymn years after his spiritual conversion when he braved a storm at sea off the coast of Ireland. While the hymn's theme of betterment underscores the collapsed enthusiasm of Hank and Charlie for the war and the coveted revenge for the dead of the *Caribou* that would come at a high price for European civilians, it also puts the characters' quest for identity in a different light when Newton, despite his alleged epiphany of the wrongfulness of slavery, continued the slave trade out of material interests, as Vivian Yenika-Agbaw compellingly argues (cf. 356 ff.).
- 25 Certainly, this is not a phenomenon of the swing era, but extends far into the twentieth century. Many critics see bebop as a direct resistance of African-American musicians against cultural appropriation, yet this genre, too, would in time be arrogated by white musicians.