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Singing the News in Sixteenth-Century Cologne: The Music Broadsheets and Pamphlets of Nikolaus Schreiber

Matthew Laube

ABSTRACT

Active in Cologne between 1563 and 1598, the German printer Nikolaus Schreiber was a prolific publisher of *Neue Zeitungen* (“new reports”), short pamphlets and broadsheets which conveyed news of current events in both prose and ballad formats. Schreiber’s five publications of news songs, which previously have received only passing consideration by scholars, are analyzed and contextualized in relation to his larger body of news pamphlets, as well as Cologne’s mixed confessional environment during the late sixteenth century.

KEYWORDS

Nikolaus Schreiber; Neue Zeitung; Cologne; Köln; ballad; song; street singer; broadsheet; pamphlet; Liedflugblatt; Liedflugschrift; Eighty Years’ War.

CZECH ABSTRACT

Zpívání novinek v Kolíně nad Rýnem v 16. století: kramářské písně a letáky Nikolause Schreibera

Německý tiskař Nikolaus Schreiber, který působil v Kolíně nad Rýnem v letech 1563 až 1598, byl plodným vydavatelem *Neue Zeitungen* („nových zpráv“), drobných tisků, které přinášely zprávy o aktuálních událostech formou prozaickou i písňovou. Pět Schreiberových vydání zpravodajských písní, jimž se dosud dostalo jen letmé pozornosti badatelů, je analyzováno a kontextualizováno ve vztahu k rozsáhlejšímu souboru zpravodajských tisků, jakož i ke smíšenému konfesijnímu prostředí Kolína nad Rýnem na konci šestnáctého století.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Nikolaus Schreiber; Neue Zeitung; Kolín nad Rýnem; Köln; balada; píseň; pouliční zpěvák; písňový jednolist; kramářská píseň; Liedflugblatt; Liedflugschrift, třicetiletá válka.

Song broadsheets and pamphlets were produced in early modern German lands in significant numbers. Even large collections of surviving items are a fragment of what was produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹ Their significance, however, extends beyond sheer quantity. Whether narrative ballads, hymns, or other secular or sacred songs, music in these cheaper formats shaped early modern culture in substantial ways, supporting early Protestant worship, establishing early cultures of the news, and facilitating social control and the flow of information across social categories (BURKE 2009: 111 and PETTEGREE 2014: 121–129).²

Given this context, the present article explores only the margins of song broadsheet and pamphlet production in early modern Germany. Its focus is a single city: the Free Imperial City of Cologne. A northern international trading hub, Cologne was located on the western borderlands of German-speaking areas, situated nearer to Antwerp and other cities of the Southern and Northern Netherlands than other German printing centers such as Nuremberg, Leipzig, and Munich. Despite both a local population of *c.* 40,000 inhabitants and the city's role as an important disseminator of news, Cologne's printers appear to have released fewer song broadsheets and pamphlets than other Free Imperial cities. Twenty-five music broadsheets and pamphlets printed in Cologne between 1570 and 1600 are extant.³ By contrast, over three times that number survive from Augsburg during the same period (ROPER 2015: 177).

This article also investigates the career of one printer, Nikolaus Schreiber, who published only a handful of songs while active in Cologne between 1563 and 1598. Just five song broadsheets and pamphlets were printed by Schreiber, all of which appeared in the final decade of his life, and together account for less than 5 percent of his total output.⁴ Across all genres of print, Schreiber's career

1) For different estimates of survival rates, see the brief summary discussion in ROPER 2017: 402.

2) Unless otherwise indicated, I use the terms "song" and "ballad" more or less interchangeably, following the terminology defined in FUMERTON – KOSEK – HANZELKOVÁ (eds.) 2022: 1.

3) This number is based on entries in the USTC (<https://ustc.ac.uk/>) and VD16 (<http://gateway-bayern.de>) (online) catalogs.

4) We do not know exactly who composed Schreiber's song texts or selected the tunes. It may have been someone in Schreiber's firm, an anonymous collaborator, or Schreiber himself.

production totaled around 120 titles (RESKE 2015: 485). Roughly half of these were university theses, political tracts, and funeral sermons. The other half was so-called *Neue Zeitungen* (“new tidings” or “new reports”), short news pamphlets – frequently printed in quarto and octavo format – recounting news of recent political or military events, spectacular or sensational happenings, and natural wonders.⁵ It is for these *Neue Zeitungen* that Schreiber is best known to bibliographers (BENZING 1963: 230 and RESKE 2015: 485). Despite their admittedly “very small number”, Doris Stoll categorized Schreiber’s news songs (*Zeitungslieder*) not as a self-contained genre but as belonging to his larger body of *Neue Zeitungen* (STOLL 1991: 19).

While marginal in many respects, Schreiber and his news songs were significant locally in Cologne. Not only did they feed local hunger for news (STOLL 1991: 19) and often tell of recent local events, but even with just five news song publications, Schreiber produced the largest number of song broadsheets and pamphlets of any printer in Cologne during the second half of the sixteenth century.⁶ Printers of news sheets and pamphlets could also exert significant influence locally, especially in pluri-lingual and multi-confessional environments like Cologne. Matthew Lundin has described the uncertainty and anxiety felt by Cologne’s residents throughout the sixteenth century. Echoing the findings of Stoll, Lundin tells of how important printed news pamphlets were as sources of information during troubled times. Through news publications, some residents hoped to substantiate rumors of significant events locally and around the world. At the same time, an abundance of news material often created confusion by obscuring the distinction between truth and misinformation (LUNDIN 2012: 239). Lundin is right to say that social, cultural, and economic uncertainty created anxiety for consumers of printed news. But printers, too, felt anxiety. In addition to negotiating local censors and facing punitive action if their publications upset princely or civic authorities, they navigated shifting tastes and markets brought on by new religious ideas as well as the large-scale movement of people.

For historians, Schreiber’s news songs shed light on how music broadsheets and pamphlets circulated in mixed cultural and religious environments and foreground the agency of printers in responding to conflict and instability. The rootedness of Catholicism in sixteenth-century Cologne was one of the city’s most notable features. Unlike other imperial cities, Cologne did not experience

5) On the definition, history, and significance of *Neue Zeitungen*, see PETTEGREE 2014: 70–75.

6) Next was Jakob Weiß, who produced four broadsheets and pamphlets of songs during the 1570s and 80s.

a “crisis of faith” with the arrival of Protestant ideas (SCRIBNER 1976). From the 1560s onward, Cologne became a major destination for thousands of Catholic exiles fleeing Calvinist regimes in the Southern and Northern Netherlands (JANSSEN 2014). Cologne played a crucial role in the birth and spread of popular Catholic sodalities and the promotion of lay devotion in Germany and the Low Countries during the Catholic Reformation (JANSSEN 2014: 141). However, the popularity of Catholicism did not result in confessional uniformity. According to Bridget Heal and Robert Scribner, local Catholics never reached full consensus even on fundamental questions of faith, devotion, and civic governance (SCRIBNER 1976; HEAL 2007: Ch. 5) in the first half of the sixteenth century. Divergence also took place in the second half of the century. As recorded in his memory book (*Gedenkbuch*), the Cologne Licentiate Herman Weinsberg maintained Erasmian irenicist views which deviated from the strands of hard-line Catholicism promoted by some locally (LUNDIN 2012: 235–239).

Cologne’s Catholicism, while entrenched, did not go unchallenged. Despite Protestantism being circumscribed by civic law, local leaders reluctantly tolerated Lutheran and Reformed dissidents. A Lutheran congregation had existed in Cologne since the mid-1570s. At the end of the sixteenth century, roughly 1,000 inhabitants adhered to German Reformed beliefs. In addition, approximately 800 Francophone Protestants lived in the city.⁷ For the most part, dissident gatherings took place in homes and other private or semi-private spaces in the city. Civic magistrates knew of and tolerated local Protestant communities, particularly if they did not openly question Catholic authority and contributed to the economic health of the city (JANSSEN 2014: 67). When clampdowns happened, authorities tended to arrest and banish pastors and elders rather than whole congregations. In 1590, the pastor of the German Reformed congregation, Johannes Badius, was arrested after a service in a congregant’s home, imprisoned, and ultimately banished from the city (CALLIHAN 2021: 28).

It was in this mixed and changing environment that Schreiber worked between 1563 and 1598. Although his first prose news publications appeared in 1574, Schreiber’s initial foray into printing news songs coincided with a sharp decline in his firm’s output later in his career. According to Stoll, Schreiber’s total per annum production peaked in 1585 with nearly 20 titles (STOLL 1991: 106). In 1589, his first new song pamphlet appeared alongside just over a dozen other titles. His two song publications in 1591 represent nearly half of his

7) These figures are taken from HEAL 2007: 208.

total release that year, while Schreiber's 1598 song pamphlet was the only item produced that year.

Schreiber's decision to begin publishing news ballads was likely driven, in part, by a desire for a swift return on a product that was easily manufactured in large numbers and could appeal to multiple local constituencies simultaneously.⁸ The following three sections of this article will examine Schreiber's career and news songs, and will discuss two characteristics of his surviving song publications which not only helped to ensure his song publications achieved a wide circulation and maximized returns, but also illuminate how one song printer navigated the cultural and religious uncertainty of the late sixteenth century.

Nikolaus Schreiber and His News Songs

Nikolaus Schreiber's connection to the city of Cologne was long and multifaceted. He spent his entire 36-year printing career in Cologne, first matriculating at the university in 1559. Four years later, Schreiber received his first printing privilege from the city council. Born in Nijmegen in the Netherlands, Schreiber shared one characteristic with an increasing number of Cologne's residents during the late sixteenth century, that of Dutch émigré. Schreiber maintained connections to printers and production centers across northern Europe. He was possibly related to the Antwerp printer, Jean Graphaeus. In 1563, Schreiber's application for a printing privilege was sponsored by the mathematician and composer Joachim Heller, who since 1551 had been a printer of broadsheets in Nuremberg.⁹

Despite living in Cologne for nearly four decades, Schreiber's career was anything but static. His print shop and personal residence moved several times over the course of his career. Stoll identified four locations where Schreiber lived and worked (STOLL 1991: 11–13), all of which were situated in the same quarter where printers had worked since the early sixteenth century (RESKE 2015: 461 and 470). Stoll has warned against interpreting Schreiber's movements as evidence of a growing and successful business, not least because Schreiber's final move in 1592 followed a year-on-year decline in production since 1589 (STOLL 1991: 12–13). Beyond a lack of physical stasis, Schreiber experienced social

8) This potential benefit of printing *Neue Zeitungen* was not exclusive to Schreiber, but widely acknowledged. See PETTEGREE 2014: 73.

9) Schreiber's biographical information here is taken from STOLL 1991: 3–5.

instability brought on by his falling in and out of favor with civic authorities and political leaders. In 1563, he was imprisoned for printing an almanac that was critical of the Duke of Jülich. Schreiber was imprisoned at the demand of the duke himself and released three days later, but only after providing proof that his report was not his own creation but duplicated information originating from the Protestant city of Erfurt (STOLL 1991: 7–10).

In her study of Schreiber's *Neue Zeitungen*, Stoll identified four news song broadsheets and pamphlets printed by Schreiber: one in 1590, two in 1591, and one in 1598 (STOLL 1991: 19).¹⁰ I have located a fifth pamphlet, printed in 1589, currently held in Berlin.¹¹ A study of Schreiber's news songs should also consider a sixth publication, printed after Schreiber's death by Stefan (Stephan) Schreiber, probably Nikolaus's son or heir (RESKE 2015: 499).¹² Schreiber's surviving news songs appeared in two formats. In a form more characteristic of Dutch ballads, two of Schreiber's publications are broadsheets, both printed in 1591. The remaining three (four including that of Stefan Schreiber) are octavo pamphlets, a format typical for news songs in German lands. Two of the octavo pamphlets contained a single ballad each, while two pamphlets each contained three ballads.

Perhaps a strategy to ensure good sales, little differentiates Schreiber's news songs from those produced elsewhere in early modern Europe. Schreiber's texts recounted sensational stories of extraordinary weather and natural phenomena, as well as exaggerated (or fabricated) accounts of scandal, tragedy, hardship, and war. The opening ballad in Schreiber's pamphlet from 1598, for example, told of a catastrophic storm stretching from Cologne southward to Mainz and Trier which brought extreme amounts of rain, thunder, and lightning which burned churches to the ground. This was followed by a narrative ballad relating news from the Netherlands of the tragic deaths of a convent's caretaker, his wife, and his children, all of whom died after the father's scandalous behavior came to light.

Moreover, like ballads produced elsewhere, Schreiber's song texts themselves highlighted the role of pamphlet-vending street singers, especially the "bench singer" (*Bänkelsänger*), who carried baskets of pamphlets and called passers-by to hear the ballad sung. Vendors of *Neue Zeitungen* were commonplace in Cologne's markets. In his madrigal "I once went for a stroll" (*Ich ging einmal spazieren*), which parodied the sounds of Cologne's marketplace around 1600, the Danzig composer

10) These primary sources are listed in the bibliography.

11) *Warhafftige Neue zeytung. Vnd ein Traurige Geschicht in ein Lied verfast vo[n] einer vngezognen Tochter wie sie ein Kindt vmbgebracht [...].* Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber, 1589. Staatsbibliothek Berlin, Shelfmark: Ye 4845.

12) *Ein warhafftigen bericht vnd neue zeittung von einem kloster welches ligt ein halbe stund von droben im schloessiger Land von der Aabttissin [...]. Im thon hilff Gott das mir gelinge [et]c.* Cologne: Stefan Schreiber, 1599. VD16 W 675.

Nicolaus Zangius referenced *Neue Zeitungen* being sold noisily alongside other everyday goods.¹³ Schreiber's broadsheet ballads were also laid out in a typical format found elsewhere in early modern Europe. On a broadsheet ballad from 1591, the title and short description appear at the top of the sheet, followed by the name of the tune – "Come to me, says the Son of God" ("Kombt herzumir, spricht Gottes Sohn"). Below this, Schreiber added a woodcut graphically illustrating the tragic death of a mother and children in the city of Leuven, beneath which Schreiber printed the song text and imprint.¹⁴ What is more, some of Schreiber's song texts were modeled on earlier publications printed elsewhere. This same broadsheet ballad from 1591 was adapted from a similar tale from Brabant which appeared twice in the early 1580s (LEDERER 2016: 304–305).

Increasing the likelihood of local interest, Schreiber's song publications regularly reported news from nearby locales. His final pamphlet, printed in 1598, contained three songs, two of which reported events in the region around Cologne (*im Cöllnischen Landt*) and "from the city of Cologne" (*aus der Statt Cöln*). Schreiber also printed news from the southern and northern provinces of the Netherlands, which appealed not just to local German-speakers interested in the Eighty Years' War occurring across the western border, but also to Dutch-speaking communities who had relocated to Cologne and were doubtless hungry for news from back home. Two of the six song publications produced by Nikolaus and Stefan Schreiber contained news from the Netherlands. Yet again, here Schreiber is not unique. News songs reporting events from the Netherlands were one continuity in Cologne during the final decades of the sixteenth century, regardless of the printer. Prior to Schreiber's first song publication in 1589 was a 1583 ballad, which began "Now listen closely one and all", which reported news of moral scandal in Antwerp during its Protestant occupation.¹⁵ In 1600, Wilhelm Lützenkirchen printed *Description of the Glorious Battle*, which told of Maurice of Orange's defeat of Spanish troops at the Battle of Nieuwpoort, a turning point for the Anglo-Dutch campaign.¹⁶

13) This madrigal was included in Zangius's *Kurtzweilige Neue Teutsche Weltliche Lieder...*, which itself was printed in Cologne by Gerard Grevenbruch in 1603. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer who shared this reference with me.

14) For a digitized version of this ballad, see *Warhafftige neue Zeitung von einer Frawen sampt dreyen Kindern wie sich selbst durch hungers [...]* [online] <http://mdz-nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb00099501-1>

15) *Warhafftige Neue zeytung vnmnd erschroockenliche Geschicht die zu Andtorff geschehen von eines Kauffmans Tochter [...]* Cologne: Jakob Weiß, 1583.

16) *Beschreibung Der Herrliche[n] Veldtschlacht vnmnd grossem erlangtem Sieg durch die Excellents Mauritij deß Printzen von Nassaw mit dem gehabten Laeger von den Herren Staaden der vereingten Niderländischen Prouincien [...]* Cologne: Wilhelm Lützenkirchen, 1600.

Neue Zeitungen in Prose and Song

In sixteenth-century Cologne, the flood of news publications led to confusion about recent events as much as it clarified them (LUNDIN 2012: 239). On at least two occasions, Schreiber printed a prose version and a song setting which separately reported about the same event. In 1589, song and prose news pamphlets independently reported the burning of a large portion of the city of Constantinople. Also in 1589, Schreiber circulated both a song and a prose version of a scandalous news story of murder, forbidden relationships, and false accusations of guilt in the French city of Reims.

Despite many similarities, song and prose news publications did not report events identically. News songs were sold differently from prose news sheets, a fact reflected in the content of the ballad itself, which highlighted the unique role of ballad sellers. In many cases, the calls of the *Bänkelsänger* for listeners to hear their ballads were written into the song texts themselves.¹⁷ Schreiber's song about Constantinople began with the words, "Listen up, I will sing to you of a terrible event and gruesome things that recently occurred in the city of Constantinople." This wording is absent from Schreiber's prose account of the same event.

Even so, Schreiber's prose and ballad versions were created in close relation to one another. While conveying the same basic set of facts, Schreiber's prose version reported events from a different narrative perspective than the ballad. Comparing Schreiber's prose and song versions about a fire engulfing Constantinople, readers were not left in confusion over the basic facts of the event. Instead, the two publications narrated events from different vantage points as a means of communicating different moralistic messages. In the prose account, *True and actual report from Constantinople of the gruesome and shocking fire*,¹⁸ Schreiber's pamphlet presented events from the perspective of Constantinople's civic authorities and merchants, foregrounding the economic devastation following the loss of commercial goods. By contrast, the song version focused not on the scale of the fire itself, but on denouncing the mob-like behavior of the Turkish soldiers who revolted and started the fire. Seen in Ill. 1 as the second ballad in the pamphlet, this was made clear by the title: "Another new report from Constantinople, of what a terrifying uproar the Turkish soldiers

17) On ballad sellers, see DEGL'INNOCENTI – Massimo ROSPOCHER (eds.) 2019.

18) *Warhafftige und eigentliche Zeitung auss Constantinopel des gewlichen unnd unerhörten Brandt [...]* Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber, 1589.

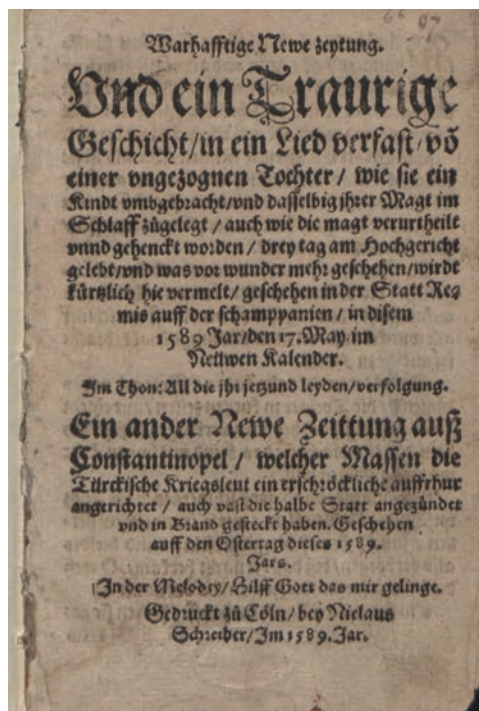


Figure 1. *Ein ander Neue Zeitung auß Constantinopel welcher Massen die Türckische Kriegsleut ein erschöckliche auffrhr angerichtet auch vast die halbe Statt angezündet vnd in Brand gesteckt haben. Geschehen auff den Ostertag dieses 1589. Jars. In der Melodey Hilff Gott das mir gelinge.* Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber, 1589. VD16 ZV 15385.

caused, igniting almost half the city and setting it in flames.”¹⁹ His song version concluded with a broad appeal for pity on Constantinople’s residents who were left poor, homeless, and destitute by the fire. The song’s final verse moralized that hearers of the ballad should be generous and pity the local poor among them, just as the poor in Constantinople should be pitied,

“O God, have mercy on the miserable woe and come to help the poor, comfort them in their woe, and come to help your Christians who now live in hardship and poverty.”

To an extent, these two versions may have been directed to different local audiences. Whereas economic and trade matters would have been of greatest interest to Cologne’s merchants and civic authorities, the ballad’s emphasis on

19) [...] *Ein ander Neue Zeitung auß Constantinopel/ welcher Massen die Türckische Kriegsleut ein erschöckliche auffrhr angerichtet/ auch vast die halbe Statt angezündet/ vnd in Brand gesteckt haben* [...] Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber, 1589.

mercy for the poor and marginalized would have resonated with those lower down the social spectrum, including many ballad sellers themselves. Although perhaps true to a degree, drawing such clear-cut boundaries misses how fluidly news sheets and ballads flowed across the lines of “high” and “low” culture, especially when broadsheets functioned as a means of controlling social behavior from above (BURKE 2009: 111). We cannot rule out that Schreiber’s song pamphlet, while intended for poorer markets, was the product of civic or religious leaders, designed to discourage mob-like behavior among Cologne’s poorer classes by detailing the devastation caused and the ultimate futility of rioting as a mechanism for changing poor residents’ material circumstances. Regardless, from Schreiber’s perspective, song was an opportunity not simply to widen access to information or advance a religious and social message, but to guarantee a swift return by creating two publications from a single event, with minimal effort needed to alter narrative perspective.

Navigating Religious Plurality

During Schreiber’s lifetime, Cologne was beset by tension and threats of sustained conflict. Not only were these pressures felt at the highest levels of ecclesiastical and civic leadership, but they also touched the lives of ordinary citizens. During the Cologne War of the 1580s, ordinary citizens – including the 70-year-old Weinsberg – took part in night watches (LUNDIN 2012: 234).

Printers of song broadsheets and pamphlets did not navigate change and uncertainty uniformly. They manoeuvred widely, catering to a wide span of religious and cultural constituencies. Some printers contributed to Cologne’s burgeoning militant Catholicism, built in part upon circulating anti-Protestant sentiments. In 1583, the printer of one octavo pamphlet waded publicly into political and confessional controversy.²⁰ That same year, Cologne had been thrown into turmoil when Gebhard Truchsess von Waldburg, Archbishop-Elector of Cologne, converted to Protestantism and sought to make the Electorate of Cologne into a secular state. Printed during the scandal, this ballad pamphlet, addressed to all Cologne residents (*ihr Kölner all*), took aim firstly at Truchsess’s wife, Agnes, a former nun. It then criticized Truchsess’s military allies such as the Calvinist Regent of the Electoral Palatinate Johann Casimir, before finally rounding on

20) *Ein schoen Newgemacht Liedt von Gebhart Truckseszen hieuoer gewesten Churfuersten zu Coeln [...] s.l.: s.n., 1583.*

the Archbishop-Elector himself, declaring him a fool and traitor comparable to Judas Iscariot.²¹ Following the ballad, printed on the final page of the pamphlet, are also two anti-Protestant couplets. The first reiterates the Lutherans' belief that "Rome, long tottering with errors and other issues will cease to be the head of the world." The second is a rebuttal from the Roman church, jabbing back that "Lutherans try to sink the ship of St Peter; it rocks, but the ship will never sink."

Other printers produced pamphlets specifically for local Protestant communities. In 1600, Leendert Clock released an octavo pamphlet containing four overtly Protestant religious songs.²² According to the title page, the songs should have a liturgical function in corporate Protestant gatherings: "Four newly composed sacred songs and canticles, as one might sing in the congregation before and after the sermon." Instead of melodies known and sung widely, Clock's pamphlet recommended tunes that were unambiguously Protestant. For the two central songs in the pamphlet, singers could use either the melody to Luther's "Aus tiefer not" ("From the depth of woe", Luther's setting of Psalm 130), the Protestant battle song "Es ist das Heil uns kommen her" ("Salvation has come here to us"), or "O Gott, wir danken deiner Güt" ("O God, we thank you for your goodness"), a grace popular with Lutherans and Calvinists to be sung at mealtimes. The pamphlet's song texts themselves aimed to unify underground Protestant communities. Rather than singular pronouns, all four songs in Clock's pamphlet used plural references to "we" and "us" repeatedly. The first song began, "Lord God, we ask you, Father of all mercy, from the bottom of our hearts: you will guide us well and are with us in this hour." It also speaks of the congregation's unity: "You have given, in our heart of hearts, in unity bound, now in this hour, we praise you for this act [the sermon], make us ready for it." The pamphlet's final song concluded with the language of kinship, encouraging "O brothers and sisters mine" to always feed "on the fine bread with one another, and triumph eternally."

Schreiber's news songs, by contrast, lack the partisan qualities found in these other contemporary broadsheets and pamphlets. Unlike the anti-Protestant pamphlet attacking Truchsess, the moralistic messages of Schreiber's surviving ballads were not confessionally divisive but broadly Christian. This has already been seen in the moralistic conclusion of the news song about the burning of Constantinople, in which hearers should be moved to sympathy and alleviate

21) *IBID.*, Aiii^v.

22) *Vier Neuwgedichter Geistlicher Lieder vnd Lobgeseng so man in der Gemeyn vor vn[d] nach der Predig zusammen Singen mag [et]c.* Cologne: s.n., 1600.

the suffering of the poor, a virtue shared by sixteenth-century Protestants and Catholics. In 1598, Schreiber's news song about a devastating storm in Cologne, and stretching as far south as Mainz and Trier, interpreted the appearance of three suns and rainbows as a sign of God's judgement and a call for repentance. Such a lesson, even God's specific use of multiple suns and rainbows to call people to confess their sin, appeared across confessional categories. One news song from Lutheran Heidelberg in 1581 described the appearance of two suns and four rainbows, which were sent by God as a call to "Christian repentance" (*Christliche busse [sic]*).²³

Moreover, Schreiber's song publications made repeated use of melodies that were known and sung widely across Protestant and Catholic areas. Many of the melodies used in Schreiber's news songs had active uses in both Protestant and Catholic communities. The melody to "Ewiger Vater im Himmelreich" ("Eternal Father in Heaven"), used by Schreiber twice in 1598, was popular in Lutheran contexts in Dresden and Frankfurt an der Oder in Electoral Brandenburg (FISHER 2013: 293), but was also known by lay Catholics and sung when visiting shrines and on pilgrimage. The Catholic songbook *Rueff-Büchlein*, created by an anonymous priest and printed in Straubing in Catholic Bavaria in 1607, used "Ewiger Vater im Himmelreich" to set a Catholic devotional song, to be sung while at the Eucharistic shrine in Deggendorf (FISHER 2013: 289–296).

"Lindenschmidt" and "Kommt her zu mir," two names referring to the same tune, were used for Schreiber's songs in 1590, 1591, and 1598. This melody had been used regularly across German lands in ballads, hymn settings, and popular song since the early sixteenth century. Outside its use in Cologne, "Kommt her zu mir" set song texts, among other things, celebrating Cologne's military opponents. In 1592, it was the musical setting for a funeral hymn to Johann Casimir in the Electoral Palatinate.²⁴ The hymn tune "Hilff Gott das mir gelinge" ("Help me, God, that I may succeed") was reused three times in Schreiber's news songs, twice in 1589 and once in 1599. Originally penned by an early Lutheran who was imprisoned for his faith, "Hilff Gott das mir gelinge" was used frequently in execution ballads across German lands throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (MCILVENNA 2022: 66). Used once, the tune "All die ihr

23) *Warhaffte Contruifactur vnd beschreibung der Juengstuerschinen grossen Wunderzeichen zweyer Sonne[n] vnd vier Regenbogen so am Himmel gestanden [...]* Heidelberg: Jacob Müller, 1581.

24) *Ein Christliche Leichpredigt Vber dem Toedlichen abgang weiland des ... Herrn Johan Casimirs [...]* Heidelberg: s.n., 1592.

jetzund leidet” (“All you who now suffer”), found in Schreiber’s first pamphlet in 1589, was sung concurrently by Anabaptists as part of the *Ausbund*.

Conclusion

In his news songs, Schreiber differed little from other printers of songs in cheap formats. Not only did the physical characteristics of his pamphlets and broadsheets conform to standard practices, but Schreiber even adapted and re-released ballads first printed by others. Like local ballad printers before and after him, Schreiber appealed to local markets by reporting on events occurring in and around Cologne, as well as news from the Netherlands.

At the same time, in Schreiber we glimpse that song printers did not respond uniformly to the mixed confessional and political environment of Cologne. Their songs and publications, in many ways, displayed characteristics as wide as the local market itself. One attribute of Schreiber’s news songs is their accessibility to several local constituencies. There is not enough evidence to suggest that Schreiber’s avoidance of confessional polemic and use of melodies sung cross-confessionally were an expression of his own religious views. Instead, his decisions were likely both strategic and practical, designed to minimize risk and ensure commercial successes in the twilight of his printing firm.

PRIMARY SOURCES

1600 *Beschreibung Der Herrliche[n] Veldtschlacht vnnd grossem erlangtem Sieg durch die Excellents Mauritij deß Printzen von Nassaw mit dem gehabten Laeger von den Herren Staaden der vereingten Niederländischen Prouincien [...]*. Cologne: Wilhelm Lützenkirchen. VD16 ZV 1379

1598 *Drey warhafftige neue Zeittungen: Die erste Von dem gewaltigen vnd erschroecklichen Wetter so den sechsten Maij an vilen Orten geschehen [...]* Auch wie drey Sonnen vnd Regenbogen den 17. Maij gesehen wurden [...]. Die ander: Auß dem Niderland zwo Meylwegs von Coeln in einem Kloster zu S. Catharinen genennet wie es dem Schaffner darinnen ... ergangen ist [...]. Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber. VD16 ZV 15325

1592 *Ein Christliche Leichpredigt Vber dem Toedlichen abgang weiland des ... Herrn Johan Casimirs [...]*. Heidelberg: s.n.. VD16 S 9362

1591 *Ein neue Zeittung von eim wunderlichen Kindt wechs geboren ist. Im Thon Wol dem der in Gottes Forcht.* Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber

1583 *Ein schoen Newgemacht Liedt von Gebhart Truckseszen hievor gewesten Churfuersten zu Coeln. Jm Thon Venus du vnd dein Kindt seit alle bede so blindt [et]c. s.l.: s.n. VD16 S 3580*

1599 *Ein warhafftigen bericht vnd neuwe zeittung von einem kloster welches ligt ein halbe stund von droben im schloessiger Land von der Aabtissin welche grosse vnzucht getrieben mit einem vogt welche zehen kinder mit im gehabt vnnnd dieselbigen jaemerlich ermoerdt [...] Jm thon hilff Gott das mir gelinge [et]c. Cologne: Stefan Schreiber. VD16 W 675*

1590 *Kurtzweilige Newe Teutsche Weltliche Lieder [...]. Cologne: Gerard Grevenbruch*

1603 *Newe zeitung aus Franckreich, was newlich vor Schlacht zwischen Kön. Mayestet vnd seiner widerpart [...] Im Thon, wie man den Lindenschmidt singt. Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber*

1600 *Vier Neuwedichter Geistlicher Lieder vnd Lobgeseng so man in der Gemeyn vor vn[d] nach der Predig zusammen Singen mag [et]c. Die Erste Bitt vnd Dancksagung im thö wie man den Hundert vnd viertzehenden Psalm Singt ... Die Ander Bitt vnd dancksagung ... im thon Es ist das Heyl vns kommen her Oder Auß tieffer not Oder O Gott wir dancken deiner guete. Die Dritt Da[n]cksagung nach der Predigt im vorigen Thon. Der vierde Lobgesang nach der Predig in der Hirschen Thon wie man singt zum Herren schrey [et]c. L. K. Ein scheid Lied auff die weyse das Jar ist lenger dann der Tag. Cologne: s.n. VD16 V 1028*

1581 *Warhaffte Contrvfartur vnd beschreibung der Juengstuerschinen grossen Wunderzeichen zweyer Sonnẽ vnd vier Regen bogen so am Himmel gestanden Vber der Churfuerstlichen Statt Heydelberg dises D. M. LXXXI. Jar. Jm Thon. Warumb betruestu dich mein Hertz. Heidelberg: Jacob Müller. VD16 W 321*

1591 *Warhafftige neue Zeittung von einer Frawen sapt dreyen Kindern wie sich selbst durch hungers noth erhan- gen gesehhen in Brabant in einer Statt Löwen genandt den 4. Martij Anno 1591. Im don Kombt herzumir spricht Gottes Sonn. Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber*

1589 *Warhafftige Newe zeytung. Vnd ein Traurige Geschicht in ein Lied verfast vo[n] einer vngezogenen Tochter wie sie ein Kindt vmbgebracht vnd dasselbig jhrer Magt im Schlaff zugelegt auch wie die magt verurtheilt vnnnd gehenckt worden ... geschehen in der Statt Remis auff der schampanien in disem 1589 Jar den 17. May [...] Jm Thon: All die jhr jetzund leyden verfolgung. Ein ander Newe Zeittung auß Constantinopel welcher Massen die Türkische Kriegsleut ein erschroekliche auffrhrur angerichtet auch vast die halbe Statt angezuendet vnd in Brand gesteckt haben. Geschehen auff den Ostertag dieses 1589. Jars. Jn der Melodey Hilff Gott das mir gelinge. Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber. VD16 ZV 15385*

1583 *Warhafftige Newe zeytung vnnnd erschroekenliche Geschicht die zu Andtorff geschehen von eines Kauffmans Tochter [...]. Cologne: Jakob Weiß. VD16 W 377*

1589 *Warhafftige und eigentliche Zeittung auss Constantinopel des gewlichen vnnnd unerhörten Brandt, darinn viel tausendt Heuser, sampt grossem Gut verbrandt, welches nicht wol auss zusprechen ist, und wie es sich begeben und zugegetragen hat in diesem 1589 Jahr. Cologne: Nikolaus Schreiber. VD16 ZV 15386*

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