

REINTERPRETING HEIMAT IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC: THE CASE OF ERIKA MANN

ANITA BUNYAN
(UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE)

ABSTRACT

This essay will explore Erika Mann's relationship to her Munich, Bavarian, and German Heimat in the context of her experience of political resistance and exile in the final years of the Weimar Republic. Drawing on her letters, journalistic writings, and the texts of her political cabaret, 'Die Pfeffermühle', the paper will argue that her experience of travel, political repression, and exile led her to reinterpret the conventional and gendered Heimat discourse of her youth as a progressive and increasingly gender-neutral phenomenon which could be mobilised by women in opposition to the chauvinistic nationalism of the Third Reich.

Dieser Aufsatz untersucht die Beziehung Erika Manns zu ihrer Münchner, bayerischen und deutschen Heimat in Zusammenhang mit ihren Erfahrungen von politischem Widerstand und Exil in den letzten Jahren der Weimarer Republik. Ihre Briefe, journalistischen Schriften und Skizzen für ihr politisches Kabarett 'Die Pfeffermühle' werden herangezogen um zu zeigen, wie sie den konventionellen und geschlechtsspezifischen Heimat-Diskurs ihrer Jugend angesichts der politischen Ereignisse und ihrer Reise- und Exil-Erfahrungen neu interpretierte. Heimat wurde für Mann zu einem oppositionellen und zunehmend geschlechtsneutralen Begriff, der von Frauen gegen den chauvinistischen Nationalismus des Dritten Reiches mobilisiert werden konnte.

'Die Fremde ist herrlich, solange es eine Heimat gibt, die wartet', is one of Erika Mann's best-known aphorisms.¹ However, how did the intrepid actress, writer, and journalist interpret the concept of Heimat? For decades, Thomas Mann's eldest child was viewed chiefly as her father's daughter, literary executor, and keeper of the family reputation. Recent scholarship by Irmela von der Lühe, Helga Keiser-Hayne, Uwe Naumann, and Tina Deist has, however, shed light on her own not inconsiderable achievements as a political journalist and cabaret producer, director, and artist before she devoted herself to her father's post-war career after her ageing parents' return to Europe in 1952.² This essay is the first to explore Erika Mann's

¹ Erika Mann, 'Interview mit uns. We are interviewed', in *Erika and Klaus Mann, Escape to Life. Deutsche Kultur im Exil*, ed. Heribert Hoven, Munich 1992, p. 17.

² Irmela von der Lühe, *Erika Mann. Eine Lebensgeschichte*, Hamburg 2009; Erika Mann, *Blitze überm Ozean. Aufsätze, Reden, Reportagen*, ed. Irmela von der Lühe and Uwe Naumann, Hamburg 2000; *Erika Mann und ihr politisches Kabarett 'Die Pfeffermühle' 1933–1937, Texte, Bilder, Hintergründe*, ed. Helga Keiser-Hayne, Hamburg 1995; Tina Deist, *Störende Sprachspiele: literaturtheoretische Reflexionen zu Erika Manns Kabarett "Die Pfeffermühle" im europäischen und amerikanischen Exil*, Würzburg 2011.

relationship to her Munich, Bavarian, and German Heimat in the context of her experience of political resistance and exile in the final years of the Weimar Republic. In keeping with the overall aims of this special number, particular emphasis will be placed on drawing out the gendered perspective of Mann's thinking about Heimat.

In the historiography of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Germany, the significance of regional history and culture was obscured by the influential narratives of nation-building, partial modernisation, and fateful exceptionalism.³ A new generation of cultural historians interested in the cultural phenomena of space and identity and in the experience of a wider range of historical subjects has, however, begun to develop a more nuanced picture of these national transformations.⁴ The constructed, dynamic, and modern nature of German provincial or regional identities is now more fully appreciated. As historians such as Celia Applegate, Alon Confino, and Abigail Green have shown, nineteenth-century German regionalism was as much a product of modernity as the new nation-state with which it coexisted.⁵ Similarly, the growing interest in the concept of the Heimat in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century can be seen as a product of dislocation, migration, and travel. As Applegate has pointed out, 'attachment to place was not the result of staying in one place or of the notorious inward-turning of the "German mind", but rather a cultural trait that comes from, as often as not, mobility, travel and distance, from looking in the rear-view mirror'.⁶ Industrialisation and urbanisation generated nostalgia for the rural life that millions of Germans had abandoned in droves for the expanding cities or for life as an emigrant. Nostalgic Heimat literature of the late nineteenth century was a product of this rapid social change.

The modern dimensions of regional culture have also been emphasised recently by literary historians and critics keen to uncouple the concept of regional literature and culture from associations of backwardness and

³ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich*, Göttingen 1975. Cf. David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in nineteenth-century Germany*, Oxford 1984.

⁴ Celia Applegate, 'A Europe of Regions: Reflection on the Historiography of Sub-National Places in Modern Times', *American Historical Review*, 104/4 (October 1999), 1157–82; David Blackbourn and James Retallack (eds), *Localism, Landscape, and the Ambiguities of Place: German-Speaking Central Europe, 1860–1930*, Toronto, Buffalo, and London 2007. See also Simone Lässig, Karl Heinrich Pohl, and James Retallack (eds), *Modernisierung und Region im wilhelminischen Deutschland: Wahlen, Wahlrecht und politische Kultur*, Bielefeld 1995, p. 7.

⁵ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials. The German Idea of Heimat*, Berkeley, CA 1990; Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor. Württemberg, Imperial Germany and National Memory, 1871–1918*, Chapel Hill, NC 1997; Abigail Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, Cambridge 2001; James Retallack (ed.), *Saxony in German History. Culture, Society and Politics, 1830–1933*, Ann Arbor, MI 2000.

⁶ Celia Applegate, 'Senses of Place', in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History*, ed. Helmut Walser Smith, Oxford 2011, pp. 49–70 (p. 50).

marginality.⁷ The changing historical functions of these cultural constructs of regionalism and the *Heimat* have now become the object of critical scrutiny in, for example, the work of Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf or Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, who have analysed the reactionary, escapist, and nostalgic uses of the concept but also drawn our attention to the progressive and critical functions performed by the *Heimat* discourse at various junctures of late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century German history.⁸

For many Germans in the 1920s, however, *Heimat* was a concept still associated with regional rural landscapes and nostalgia for an idealised version of German village life. Erika Mann alludes to this in 1930 in an article she wrote for 'Die Heimat', the 'Unterhaltungs-Beilage' of the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, entitled 'Liebeserklärung an Bayern':

Man ist als Kind oft trotzig gewesen, weil man so sehr viele Aufsätze schreiben mußte. Die hießen dann 'Naturschönheiten der Schwäbisch-Bayerischen Hochebene', 'Die Bedeutung des Ludwigs-Donau-Main-Kanals' und 'Der Heimatgau mit seinen Bodenschätzen' [...]. Man beschloß bei sich, das Ganze als eine häßliche Puschel der Schule aufzufassen, fand den Heimatgau *nicht* schön, liebte das Meer mit einem Akzent, der sich unbedingt gegen das Schwäbisch-Bayerische richtete, und flocht, ließ es sich irgend machen, Einschränkendes über die Qualität der Holzkohlen in die Aufsätze ein. Ein paar Jahre hat es gedauert, ehe das überwunden war. Aber wie sehr spricht es für dieses Bayern, daß man nicht länger dazu brauchte.⁹

Erika Mann spent her early life in the family villa in the smart quarter of Bogenhausen in Munich and in the family's country house near Bad Tölz in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps. However, the formative experiences of travel, political repression, and of exile from her homeland at the age of twenty-eight led her to reinterpret the concept of *Heimat* which she had initially dismissed as 'eine häßliche Puschel der Schule'.¹⁰ The young Manns were exceptionally mobile. Erika and her younger brother Klaus were inveterate travellers. In 1927, in their early twenties, they embarked on a nine-month world tour that took them for six months to America and then on to Honolulu, Japan, Korea, China, and Russia. Erika, with her mobility, love of fast cars, acting career, and cropped hairstyle, was the incarnation of the 'new woman' of the Weimar Republic. World travel transformed her relationship to her *Heimat*, a term she applied now in

⁷ Meike Werner, *Moderne in der Provinz: Kulturelle Experimente im Fin de Siècle* Jena, Göttingen 2003.

⁸ See also Florentine Strzelczyk who has drawn attention to the gendered nature of the *Heimat* discourse in recent German literature. Florentine Strzelczyk, 'Frauen – Heimat – Identität. Überlegungen zur Neukonzeption von Kulturräumen', in *Region – Literatur – Kultur. Regionalliteraturforschung heute*, ed. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, Bielefeld 2001, pp. 77–93.

⁹ 'Liebeserklärung an Bayern', in *Blitze* (note 2), p. 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

1930 in a more positive but still conventional sense to the landscapes of her Bavarian homeland:

Heute weiß ich nichts Hübscheres als, von der Reise kommend, irgendwoher, wo es kahl und großartig war, allmählich bayerische Landschaft auftauchen zu sehen, – das Weite, Hügelhafte, Großzügige, Liebliche, Anspruchlose, die Farben dieser Sumpfwiesen, die Wälder, hinter denen man die Berge weiß, das bebaute Feld und die Dörfer, von denen man schon wieder vergessen hatte, wie bezaubernd sie waren. Hatte man nicht geglaubt, man habe Einzigartiges gesehen, unterwegs, Unübertreffliches? Aber dies hier kann es aufnehmen damit, so viel ist sicher. Und wo gab es die Harmonie der Landschaft mit Bauten, Menschen, Trachten in einem so reinen Grade? Wo war sie so unverwüstlich? Es ist sonderbar: aber Bayern scheint einen Schutzgeist zu haben, irgendeinen guten Engel. [...] erinnert haben wir uns an Bayern überall einmal. Wenn irgendwo ein Wiesenweg, eine Bergkette, eine Viehweide uns besonders zu Herzen sprach, erkannten wir bald mit dem Heimatlichen die Ähnlichkeit, – ‘fast wie bei Tölz’, – ‘weißt du noch, Andechs?’¹¹

The memory of the Bavarian Heimat is the reference point against which foreign landscapes and cultures are measured and increasingly found wanting. Travel opened up a new perspective which engendered an unexpected appreciation of the Heimat. What, she wondered, would the school friends forced to write essays about Bavaria say if they read her love letter to the Bavarian Heimat? Mann was not, however, in the least bit sentimental about the Bavarians. In an article for the newspaper *Tempo* in 1929, entitled ‘Oberammergau mobilisiert’, she satirised their cynical commodification of their folk culture and religiosity and portrayed them affectionately as wily exploiters of naïve tourists.¹²

For Mann at this stage, Heimat is a concept associated with personal memories of familiar places and spaces rather than people. This was a conventional and often highly gendered view which, as Peter Blickle has shown, drew on a patriarchal cultural discourse that associated the concept of the Heimat with the supposedly feminine qualities of a non-threatening, undemanding, and consoling beauty.¹³ Mann’s youthful paean to the ‘[h]ügelhafte, [g]roßzügige, [l]iebliche, [a]nspruchlose’ Bavarian landscape draws to a striking degree on these gendered tropes of contemporary Heimat discourse.

The rise of National Socialism and the experience of political repression, however, caused Mann to reinterpret the concept of Heimat as a critical political phenomenon which could be mobilised, not least by women activists themselves, in opposition to the chauvinistic nationalism of the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77–8.

¹² ‘Oberammergau mobilisiert’, *ibid.*, p. 71.

¹³ Peter Blickle, *Heimat. A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland*, Woodbridge, VA 2002, pp. 81–92.

Third Reich. Historians of Imperial Germany have concluded that the concepts of 'Heimat' and 'Nation' were mutually reinforcing.¹⁴ However, the totalitarian pressures of National Socialism led increasingly to tensions between the concepts of Bavarian and German identity. Munich may have been the 'Hauptstadt der Bewegung' and the location of the headquarters of the Nazi party. But the Nazis were at loggerheads with the Bavarian regional government.¹⁵ Political regionalism and Bavarian separatism threatened the German nationalist ideology of the Nazis and their visions of a German 'Volksgemeinschaft' and a more centralised Federal government. In February 1933, just after the seizure of power by the Nazis, Mann organised a party for her cabaret troupe and wrote to her mother that they were now flirting with the idea of a restoration of the Bavarian monarchy under Rupprecht, the Crown Prince in waiting:

dabei hatten wir alle noch die ganze Nacht die Hoffnung, schon am nächsten Morgen als Untertanen von Knecht Rupprecht zu erwachen. [...] So kasperltheaterhaft und widrig es ja wäre, so gern hätte ich es doch im Augenblick, – denn schließlich Übergangsgestalten sind das alles und Ruppri netter und würdiger als Adi, dessen Todesbiß es zweifellos wäre.¹⁶

This process of polarisation between the concept of Heimat and the exclusionary nationalism of Germany's political leaders is evident in the sketches of Erika Mann's political cabaret 'Die Pfeffermühle'. Back in Munich after her world tour, Erika earned a living as an actress, journalist, writer, racing driver, and producer of a cabaret. Founded in January 1933 by Mann and the musician Magnus Henning, the driving force behind the cabaret was a dynamic group of women writers, directors, and performers. Most of the cabaret sketches were written by Mann, the first female *conférencier* of a German cabaret. Some of the most successful sketches were performed or directed by the 'star' of the cabaret, her close friend and co-founder, the formidable Jewish actress Therese Giehse (1898–1975) from Munich who was forced to emigrate in 1933 but became famous in post-war Germany for her stage performances of Brecht's powerful female characters and Dürrenmatt's grotesque female figures Claire Zachanassian and Mathilde von Zahnd. Mann and Giehse were ably supported by the actress Sybille Schloß, a colleague of Giehse at the Munich Kammerspiele, also persecuted for her Jewishness, and, from 1934, by the Dresden dancer Lotte Goslar, who enriched the programme with her dark and provocative 'Grotesk-Tanz'.

¹⁴ See Confino and Green (note 5).

¹⁵ See Jeremy Noakes, 'Federalism in the Nazi State', in *German Federalism. Past, Present, Future*, ed. Maiken Umbach, Basingstoke 2002, pp. 118–20.

¹⁶ Erika Mann to Katia Mann, Munich, February 1933, in *Erika Mann. Briefe und Antworten*, ed. Anna Zanco Prestel, 2 vols, Munich 1984, I (1922–1950), p. 33.

'Die Pfeffermühle' was a political cabaret. As Erika Mann recalled, 'noch ehe [Hitler] da war, hatte ich keinerlei Lust mehr am bloßen Theaterspielen, sondern wünschte, mich gegen ihn zu betätigen'.¹⁷ Her decision to use the celebrated Munich cabaret venue, the 'Bonbonnière', situated right next to the cavernous Hofbräuhaus, a beer cellar frequented by National Socialists, was exceptionally courageous:

Während Hitler brüllte, schwiegen wir nicht. Wir schwiegen auch nicht an jenem Februarabend, da im Hofbräuhaus, Rücken an Rücken mit unserer 'Bonbonnière', der 'Führer' seine Antrittsrede als Reichskanzler hielt. In unserem wie immer überfüllten Saal befand sich Herr Frick [Wilhelm Frick, Reich Minister of the Interior] – eifrig kritzelnd. Er stellte seine schwarze Liste her.¹⁸

By 1932 Erika had attracted the attention of local Nazis who threatened her and employed an arsenal of misogynistic tropes to denounce her in their newspapers and propaganda magazines, *Die Front* and the *Illustrierter Beobachter*, as a 'Jewish' feminist, a 'Zuhälterin des jüdischen Sklavenhalters' and a 'pazifistische Friedenshyäne'.¹⁹ She was physically intimidated when attending a conference of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and prevented from appearing at the 'Weissenburger Festspiele' by threats of violence.²⁰ She took the Nazi newspapers to court in Bavaria and won compensation. 'Natürlich ist es grauenhaft in Deutschland', she wrote to her friend Eva Herrmann in 1932 while on holiday in Denmark, 'uns graut vor der Rückkehr in dieses Wahnsinnsland, in dem man uns zum Überfluß täglich Bomben und Gummiknüppel androht in sämtlichen Hitler-Blättern, die doch bald allein die Öffentlichkeit darstellen werden'.²¹

Eulogised by Thomas Mann as the 'Schwanengesang der deutschen Republik',²² the Munich performances of the 'Pfeffermühle', from January to February 1933, tentatively satirised the political violence of the era and the psychological effects of this political repression.²³ The sketch 'Auf dem Fundbureau', for example, satirises the pedantry and narrow-mindedness but also the power of state officials: 'Sie glauben, hier vor Verfolgung sicher zu sein!' exclaims the 'Beamter' to the 'Finder' who comes to the Lost Property Office to hand in an umbrella and is subjected to an increasingly sinister interrogation. The tone of the sketch shifts almost imperceptibly from light-hearted comedy to horror and madness, reflecting the speed

¹⁷ *Briefe*, I (note 16), p. 22.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22. See also Lühe, *Erika Mann* (note 2), p. 86.

²⁰ Lühe, *Erika Mann* (note 2), pp. 85 and 88–9.

²¹ Erika Mann to Eva Herrmann, Denmark, 27 August 1932, in *Briefe*, I (note 16), p. 26.

²² Lühe, *Erika Mann* (note 2), p. 169.

²³ *Erika Mann und ihr politisches Kabarett 'Die Pfeffermühle' 1933–1937, Texte, Bilder, Hintergründe*, ed. Helga Keiser-Hayne, Hamburg 1995, pp. 26–8. Further references to this edition will take the abbreviated form PM, followed by the page number.

with which a society can fall into the hands of a dictatorial power. Another sketch, 'Auto(angst)traum', describes an anxiety dream where the more mundane fear of parking fines or 'Strafen' overlaps in a repressive society with fears of 'Todesstrafen' and where oppression leads to madness (PM, p. 32).

Mann's early cabaret sketches thematise the disorientating effects of the political oppression and violence which coexist with the rituals of everyday life: contemporary life is '[m]anchmal mies und zum Verrecken, – manchmal plötzlich wieder gut' (PM, p. 49). In 'Harlekin' the author dons a 'Narrenkleid' to allude to this sense of disorientation but, pointing to the 'grüner Hoffnungsleck, am bunten Kleid', expresses optimistic faith in the victory of reason, a theme that runs through the sketches of the 'Pfeffermühle':

Wenn wir mal vernünftig werden [...]
Ist auf dieser schönen Erden
Schon ein hohes Ziel erreicht. (PM, p. 49)

On 9 March 1933 the Bavarian administration of Heinrich Held was deposed and replaced by that of Reichskommissar General Ritter Franz von Epp, a longstanding associate of Hitler. Four days later, on 13 March 1933, Erika and Klaus Mann warned their parents not to return to Bavaria and slipped away to join them in exile in Switzerland. In April 1933, a letter by Mann to her friend Eva Herrmann gave an insight into the dangers her family faced as she tried to re-establish her cabaret in exile:

Ich hatte ein so schönes Cabaret in München, zum Beispiel, zwei Monate lang, alles selbst gemacht, Texte von mir, Musik von Magnus Henning, dargestellt von lauter Freunden. Trotzdem war es gut und ging wie heiße Semmeln. Wir haben direkt Geld verdient und Ruhm geerntet und waren dreist und frech, bis Herr Epp kam [...] und die bayerischen Irr-Wahlen. Dann mußten wir davon huschen, wollten in Zürich neuöffnen, alles stand prächtig, da kam das Geiselsystem in Deutschland und die Methode, Angehörige von Leuten, die sich draußen mißliebig machten, drinnen halbtotzuschlagen und ins Lager zu verbringen.²⁴

Nevertheless, in October 1933 the 'Pfeffermühle' opened again in Zurich in the venue 'Zum Hirschen' before touring to Holland, Luxemburg, Belgium, and Czechoslovakia to warn Europeans of the danger posed by Hitler's Germany. Harassed by Nazi sympathisers and attempts by the regime to pressurise foreign governments into censoring the troupe, the 'Pfeffermühle' staged the last of its over one-thousand performances in Salzburg on 4 August 1936.

In the cabaret songs written in exile, Mann's concept of Heimat is politicised and transformed from a territorial concept focused on

²⁴ *Briefe*, I (note 16), p. 36.

landscape to an oppositional linguistic and cultural concept. Heimat now assumes a more critical function as it is increasingly associated with a childhood language and innocence destroyed by violence and horror perpetrated in the name of the 'Vaterland'. In 'Kinderlied', a pastiche of a German folk song, written by Mann and performed by Sybille Schloß, for example, a delicate little female singer bids farewell to the beloved 'Heimatland' of her childhood which has succumbed to brutality:

Üb' immer Treu und Redlichkeit,
Dann bleibst Du immer arm,
Nun ade, Du mein lieb Heimatland.
Daß Dein sich Gott erbarm! (PM, p. 88)

In the song, lines and motifs from German folk songs and nursery rhymes combine with images of violence, loss, and isolation:

Kuckuck, Kuckuck,
Rufts aus dem Wald.
Und Emil liegt im Walde,
so still und stumm.
Er hat aus lauter Purpur
Ein Mäntlein um.
Blutig sieht der Emil aus
Der kommt nimmermehr nach Haus.
Wer hat meinen Emil gemacht so stumm? (PM, p. 89)

Fairy tales and songs of the Heimat, such as 'Kuckuck, Kuckuck, ruft's aus dem Wald' are debased and deformed just as the German language of Mann's Bavarian childhood is appropriated by the Nazis. But Mann and Schloß now mobilise the language of the childhood Heimat to denounce the brutality of its newly elected rulers.

In ironic rewritings of the fairy tales, Mann cites the deceptively unassuming 'lauter Märchen' of her childhood against the Nazis and satirises the gullibility and intellectual torpor of those left behind in the 'Schlaraffenland' of her Heimat (PM, p. 144). The experience of the traditional German fairy-tale characters of her 'Heimatland' is more relevant than ever before, she claims in her introduction to the sketches, and she urges the audience to reflect 'ob es nicht unsere eigene, sonderbare Menschenwelt ist, die sich – noch immer, – in ihnen spiegelt' (PM, p. 141). In her rewriting of the Grimm fairy tale, 'Hans im Glück', an ironic riches to rags story, for example, Hans is stripped of his income, livelihood, Heimat, passport, rights, and finally of his life, yet continues unthinkingly to protest his good fortune:

Wie sich das trifft,
Nein, wie sich das schickt!
Ich war meiner Lebtag noch nie so beglückt.

Die leidige Heimat [and in the final stanza 'Das leidige Leben'] ist endlich dahin, –
Was ich für ein Hans im Glück immer bin! (PM, p. 142)

The cabaret songs written by Mann in exile no longer idealise the gendered tropes of Heimat, however, or present it as an object of nostalgia. Running through many of Mann's sketches is a narrative of protest against the violent corruption of the Heimat, articulated by a range of stock female figures, played by Giehse, Schloß, and Mann herself, whose conventional functions are in some sense subverted. In 'Die Dummheit', one of the hits of the cabaret, Mann satirises the stupidity and quiescence of the duped Bavarian people. In this sketch Giehse adopts the pose of the monumental bronze sculpture of the female figure of Bavaria positioned in front of the Ruhmeshalle on the Theresienwiese in Munich. Raising her right arm and presenting an imaginary sword with her left, Giehse lampoons the monument and sings:

Ich bin die Dummheit, hört mein Lied
und nehmt es nicht zu leicht.
Nichts gibt's, soweit das Auge sieht,
das mir an Dummheit gleicht. (PM, p. 107)

Another cabaret song, 'Die Krankenschwester', laments the quiescence of 'mein armes Ländchen'. Here Giehse in a nurse's uniform presides over a ward where 'Hier im Haus soll's allerorten/Diktatorisch dunkel sein!' The songs seek to shake the Bavarians and Germans out of their stupor. But Mann's political cabaret also skewers Bavarian opportunism and the willingness of the Bavarians to profit from the rise to power of the Nazis. In 'Die Jodlerin', a comic song with a dark undercurrent, Mann lampoons the Bavarian commercial exploitation of the supposedly 'ancient German customs' celebrated by Nazi 'Blut und Boden' ideology. Performed by Giehse, the singer appears wearing 'herrliche Tegernseer Gewandung mit Münzen, Hirschbart und allem Zubehör', only to reveal at the end that her regional folk costume has been made in Chicago. The song unmasks the mechanisms of deception used to construct and sustain concepts of community and invented traditions in Nazi Germany, and the idealised woman of the traditional Heimat imagination is unmasked as an agent and cynical exploiter of totalitarianism.

In her cabaret programme 'Kaltes Grauen' and ironic fairy tale 'Die Hexe', Mann links her new identity as an exile, a stranger, to that of other 'outsiders' and scapegoats with whom she now identifies – deviant women (witches), clowns, and Jews. In the guise of the witch she concludes with the ironic lines:

Wie ich hier steh in Blus und Rock,
War ich der Menschheit Sündenbock
Durch viele hundert Jahre. [...]

Ein wahres Glück, daß heutzutage,
 Von einem Teil der Schimpf und Plag
 Die Juden mich entlasten. (PM, p. 146)

Mann's satirical fairy tale thus brings to light the often gendered mechanisms of exclusion and scapegoating that underpin concepts of belonging.

After her emigration to the United States in 1936, Mann's concept of Heimat expanded to encompass the European homeland she had been forced to leave. In 1937 she wrote to her mother from New York:

Ach, man wird nie zur Ruhe kommen, und bei allem Gefühl für die
 Möglichkeiten und Zukunftsmöglichkeiten dieses wilden Landes bleibt das
 Gefühl der Zugehörigkeit zum europäischen Misthäufchen doch so recht
 lebhaft bestehen, und jeder Hahn, der von dorten kräht, kräht heimatlich.²⁵

By 1942, after years on the move, giving speeches, writing, and lecturing about the dangers posed by the Third Reich, Mann's concept of Heimat evolved yet again and became associated not with the landscapes, language, or people of her new home in the United States, but with the American Pullman car, the train carriage which transported her around the vast continent. In a magazine article originally published in English, 'Mein Vaterland, der Pullman Wagen', Mann describes the reality of her peripatetic life in the United States:

Aber jeden Abend wartet mein unterer Schlafwagenplatz, meine alte Heimat
 auf mich, und ich krieche hinter den grünen Vorhängen unter die Decke.
 Dort finde ich zwei von kundiger Hand zurechtgelegte Kopfkissen, zwei
 Lampen am Kopf- und am Fußende, ein sehr praktisches Netz für meine
 Nachtlektüre und ein Bord für meine Reisetasche. Ich fühle mich im unteren
 Schlafwagenbett überhaupt nicht fremd [...].²⁶

Mann's concept of 'mein reisendes Heim'²⁷ develops a theme expressed in a song written for the 'Pfeffermühle' in exile by the writer Walter Mehring. Mehring's searing 'Emigrantenchoral' urges German political emigrants to forget and to abandon their nostalgia for the fixed sites of the Heimat from which they have been banished and of which they have been robbed:

Die ganze Heimat und
 das bißchen Vaterland
 Die trägt der Emigrant
 Von Mensch zu Mensch – von Ort zu Ort
 An seinen Sohl'n, in seinem Sacktuch mit sich fort. (PM, p. 119)

²⁵ Erika Mann to Katia Mann, New York, 1 February 1937, in *ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁶ 'Mein Vaterland, der Pullman-Wagen', in *Blitze* (note 2), p. 261.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

Mann's multiple and resourceful reinterpretations of the Heimat idea reveal the flexible and often contradictory character of this highly malleable concept. From now on, in the wartime era of persecution, expulsion and displacement, Heimat is reinterpreted as a gender-neutral, mobile concept associated with forgetting, systems of transport, and the few familiar material possessions a refugee can transport and call home. Indeed, from her relatively privileged perspective, Mann even seems to be in a position to embrace the new mobile Heimat as a liberation from gendered cultural and social expectations and as an opportunity to forge – if only for a time – an independent career as a highly prescient political journalist.