

<CT>Erika Mann, the BBC German Service, and Foreign-Language Broadcasting during WWII

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Foreign-language broadcasting projects in the United Kingdom and the United States faced momentous challenges during World War II, a time when totalitarian regimes had successfully appropriated wireless technology for propaganda purposes. As Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer would argue, countries such as Nazi Germany had turned radio into an agent of political repression by creating passively receptive audiences who uncritically absorbed fascist doctrines.¹ When war broke out in Europe, Hitler's party had already colonized the airwaves at home to leave dissenters no opportunities to make their voices heard on the radio.² But as the case of "Lord Haw-Haw's" "Germany Calling" program demonstrates, the Nazis had also set up a range of foreign-language services, hoping to conquer the European continent (and the rest of the globe) through the calculated use of sound.³ Technological progress had not improved international relations. On the contrary, such transnational broadcasting initiatives as the ones pursued by the Nazis evidenced how easily new communication systems could be exploited to support expansionist claims made by political aggressors.⁴ How, then, could the Allies develop their own foreign-language programs if transnational broadcasting had become stigmatized as Nazi Germany's propaganda tool? Few doubted that the dissemination of counterpropaganda over the wireless was an essential aspect of Allied warfare because these transnational broadcasts would allow communication with listeners in Germany who could be encouraged to overthrow their totalitarian leaders. But what kind of programs would be most effective in converting listeners—who had been living, willingly or unwillingly, with Nazi propaganda for almost a

decade—into allies? And who were the individuals best suited to gain influence with these listeners?

To address these questions, this article examines Erika Mann's involvement with German-language broadcasting projects initiated in Britain and the United States during World War II. Her case, I argue, provides insights into some of the challenges faced by radio administrators, government officials, and intellectuals who were charged with confronting Nazi propaganda without recognizably replicating the despotism associated with broadcasts from Germany. Mann is a crucial person to consider in this context because she worked with foreign-language broadcasting practices on both sides of the Atlantic. As a well-known actress, writer, and political activist who categorically opposed Hitler and who also happened to be the oldest daughter of the German Nobel Prize-winning novelist, Thomas Mann, she was one of the celebrity figures called upon in Allied attempts to reach German listeners. In 1940, Duff Cooper, Britain's Minister of Information, assisted her in addressing Nazi Germany via BBC microphones, providing her with broadcasting experience that also allowed Mann to work in an advisory capacity for the Roosevelt administration when the US set up its German-language broadcasts in 1942.

In response to Ian Whittington's suggestion that "the tendency to downplay the roles played by human systems in shaping and regulating" the "mutually influencing technologies" of the modern period amounts to a critical "shortcoming" in radio studies, I use Mann's experiences as radio broadcaster and consultant to discuss the various, at times controversial, directives informing editorial decisions, program delivery, and staffing choices in Allied broadcasting to Germany.⁵ Mann's politically inspired cosmopolitanism clearly echoed modernism's international sensibilities, but her BBC work occurred at a time of unprecedented political unrest.

At this moment, political convictions of intellectuals such as Mann were put to the test because the global spread of fascism seemed to leave them no choice but to lend their support to democratic governments that many of them considered only insufficiently liberal or tolerant in outlook. In a move that Ian Whittington has termed a “calculated instance of collaboration,” these public intellectuals “who chose to broadcast” on behalf of the Allies accepted that they had “traded a measure of their independence for a voice in an anti-fascist struggle that they judged to be more significant than other (still significant) ethical and political issues.”⁶ In Mann’s case, it meant participating in transnational broadcasting initiatives that celebrated objectivity, neutrality, and authenticity as ideological linchpins of a carefully manufactured propaganda narrative. But as surviving accounts of her professional involvement with Allied broadcasting illustrate, Mann was aware that a set of prevalent cultural stereotypes affected the construction of the voice with which the BBC German Service addressed its listeners: many individuals who had come to the UK as refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe were habitually prevented from accessing the microphone. As a committed anti-fascist, who regarded foreign-language broadcasts to enemy-occupied territories as an opportunity to speak to, possibly even re-educate, audiences in Nazi Germany, Mann nonetheless complied with, even wrote in support of, a broadcasting style that aspired to sonic consistency and obscured the ideological objectives underpinning its production. Her voice as a broadcaster and radio consultant was the result of a temporary compromise between her own, often categorical, political beliefs and a set of administrative directives that, at times, indirectly confirmed racial and social hierarchies in the attempt to organize Allied counterpropaganda.

But Mann also wrote “That Burning Sky,” a short story that imaginatively drew on her time at the BBC in the early 1940s. And here, in this fictional, unpublished rendering of BBC

working practices, a more critical voice emerges, showing that individuals from different linguistic, national, and cultural backgrounds collaborated to create that monolithic, objective BBC radio voice into which listeners in Germany were meant to put their trust. With its realist frame, its array of different characters, and its prominent spy fiction intertext, “That Burning Sky” offered Mann the opportunity to examine the mechanism responsible for developing the BBC’s official narrative of broadcasting neutrality. Mann, I shall show here, used her story to record something that, due to censorship regulations, could not have been publicly declared: that the seemingly neutral, unbiased BBC radio voice, that cornerstone of Allied propaganda initiatives, was a collaboratively designed, fictional construct with polyvocal beginnings. And Mann’s own polyvocality—her conflicting accounts of Allied broadcasting projects captured publicly and privately in different textual forms—thereby illustrates the modernist writer’s partiality for fiction at a time when the authenticity of war reportage had to be consistently questioned by radio audiences but was also advertised and vociferously defended by Allied broadcasters as political ideal and imperative. When aiming to document BBC broadcasting practices in all their complexity, Mann, who was a creative writer as well as a war correspondent and journalist, quite understandably turned to writing fiction. As she would have realized, not the limited textual frame of factual journalism but the fictional form of the short story was the vehicle best suited to deliver an account of the debates, the controversial political mandates, and the voices responsible for—but also carefully concealed by—the dispassionate, unprejudiced tone adopted by BBC news readers. Together, Mann’s published and unpublished, literary and factual accounts of the radio war shed light on this modernist intellectual’s involvement with and creative responsiveness to the new public fora of an increasingly interconnected, multilingual world produced by transnational broadcasting.⁷

<A>“A Light-Minded Prelude”: Weimar Germany and Mann’s Pre-War Activism

Like the medium through which she spoke to Nazi Germany, Mann was constantly in motion, easily crossing national borders and endorsing an intellectual cosmopolitanism in line with her status as a member of interwar Germany’s youthful avant-garde. Berlin was the center of a thriving art scene during the Weimar years; it was also the center to which Mann and her brother Klaus gravitated in 1924 when they finished (or decided to prematurely terminate) their formal education. Here, she studied acting with Max Reinhardt, Germany’s most famous avant-garde director and producer, but she soon began leading the itinerant lifestyle that would characterize her life as a war correspondent. In 1925, she toured the country with Pamela Wedekind, Gustaf Gründgens, and Klaus Mann in a production of her brother’s play *Anja and Esther*—a work in which the emotional and sexual entanglements of the protagonists barely concealed the off-stage relationships (and marital arrangements) among the four actors.⁸ In her life and work Mann made her bohemian partialities extremely apparent.

“The Literary Mann Twins,” as the American papers erroneously labelled them, arrived in New York in October 1927, following the noncommittal inquiry by the publisher Horace Liveright whether Klaus Mann would consider a US lecture tour (Weiss, *In the Shadow*, 58). In spite of speaking very little English, they were soon dining with H. L. Mencken and meeting Greta Garbo in Hollywood.⁹ With hindsight, this meeting with American literary culture and the US entertainment industry appeared, as Klaus later noted, “as a light-minded prelude to graver experiences we were destined to pass through. A dress rehearsal of exile—that’s what it actually was” (*The Turning Point*, 132). But these early encounters would help Mann nine years later when she sought permanent refuge in the United States, providing professional contacts and an

extensive network of influential friends. Indeed, a lot had changed by the time Mann returned to the United States as an immigrant. She had become a committed Nazi opponent, had left Germany in 1933, and had toured Europe with her political cabaret *Die Pfeffermühle* (*The Peppermill*), which delivered subtle criticisms of Germany's new leaders in humorous sketches and polemic songs. In 1935, she was denaturalized, but her marriage of convenience to W. H. Auden provided her with a British passport and would later pave the way for her professional activities in Britain as a war journalist and BBC broadcaster.¹⁰

Almost immediately after arriving in the United States in 1936, Mann began working as a public lecturer, speaking in front of high school students in Tulsa, the women's club of Pittsburgh, and the American Jewish Congress in Chicago in the hope of convincing listeners that a war against Hitler was unavoidable and, once hostilities had begun, that a speedy declaration of war had become imperative. In spite of this bustling political activism, however, she wanted to be back in Europe, and in 1938 she and Klaus decided to travel to Spain to document the Civil War in broadcasts and newspaper articles.¹¹ In the same year, Mann also published a book that contained her most outspoken critique of the Hitler regime to date: *School for Barbarians*, a study of the Nazi education system that, Mann argued, used the school, youth organizations as well as print media, radio programs, and the cinema to enforce acquiescence to Nazi ideology.¹² With this publication, Mann completed her transition from unburdened, youthful performer to political commentator. If she had packaged, as in *Anja and Esther*, the expression of her personal and sexual politics into exploratory, experimental forms, she now saw writing, especially journalism, first and foremost as a suitable medium for uncovering aspects of the large-scale humanitarian crisis developing in Europe.¹³ But her cosmopolitan outlook and early interest in experimental performance practices made her also very well suited to adopt a

new professional persona as broadcaster for the German-language programs that the BBC had been developing since September 1938.

<A>Producing the Voice of the BBC German Service

In May 1940, Mann wrote to Duff Cooper to offer her services as a BBC broadcaster, hoping that she could assist in efforts to awaken resistance against the Nazis among German listeners. As her letter illustrates, this was a project in which she firmly believed. Not only did she think that she “would be able to do a useful job for the German-language broadcasts from London,” but she also suggested that “certain results can be hoped for if and when the right people address that diseased nation in the right way.”¹⁴ In the autumn of 1940, Mann spoke seven times on the German Service, a year later she addressed German listeners eight times, and in 1943 she returned to the BBC microphone for two additional talks to Germany and Austria (fig. 1).¹⁵ Unlike the radio messages sent to German listeners by her father, however, Mann’s talks have not been collected and only three of them survive as typescripts.¹⁶ But elsewhere, she spoke in detail about the content of these talks:

<EXT>About once or twice a week I spoke to the Germans. I told them that they were fighting, suffering and dying for a bad, an evil, a hopeless cause, a cause the rest of humanity would never permit to prevail. I spoke to them about the British and American determination to see this fight through to the end, no matter how long it might last and no matter what sacrifices it might ask for and I besieged [*sic*] them time and again to bethink themselves and to spare the world including the German nation the mounting horrors of a prolonged war which in the end could have but one result, the destruction of

Hitlerism from without, unless they preferred to shorten and modify the disaster by making an end themselves.¹⁷<EXT>

That these broadcasts were noticed in Germany is suggested by evidence collected by BBC monitors.¹⁸ They established that the *Deutschlandsender* had broadcast a feature entitled “Erika Mann on the Air” on the day after one of her 1940 talks. It stated that “Erika Mann, as the good adopted child of plutocracy,” who “belongs to that London clique of emigrants which is largely guilty of this war, and which has always energetically fought against the Fuehrer’s attempt for an Anglo-German understanding” spoke “yesterday at the London radio” and “took over the task of minimising German airraids [w]ithout any compassion for the hundreds of thousands of Londoners reported by American journalists, victims of Churchill’s criminal policy.”¹⁹ That Germany’s national station felt compelled to issue counterpropaganda to Mann’s BBC message suggests that the Nazis deemed it important enough to warrant rebuttal. In fact, in an interview from October 31, 1940 broadcast by the American station WMCA, Mann almost proudly reinforced this point. When speaking about her work for the BBC, she told American listeners: “the *Völkische Beobachter*, Mr Hitler’s own paper, has attacked me, the German radio has attacked me, and even Lord Haw-Haw did me the honor to answer one of my broadcasts.”²⁰

<INSERT FIG. 1 ABOUT HERE>

However, even within the BBC, Mann’s guest appearances were discussed and critiqued, and these debates about her suitability as a broadcaster provide insights into the motivations influencing decisions about German-language broadcasting at the BBC in the early phase of the war. As internal memos show, disagreement existed, at the beginning of her broadcasting career,

if Mann was to speak anonymously or use her name when delivering her talks.²¹ In general, immigrants, especially well-known Nazi objectors, were prevented from addressing Germany via BBC microphones. Although letters from German listeners received by the BBC during the war document that “talks by their own countrymen [were] of wide interest” to them, the roles of most German immigrants working for the BBC were supportive ones.²² As so-called outside artists, they scripted and translated news, features, or other program elements and even if they were to “appear at the microphone,” it was “only as voices in features and as newsreaders.”²³ All “commentaries had to be spoken by British voices” (Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told*, 155).²⁴ This stance was deemed essential for upholding the Corporation’s commitment to fact-based journalism, which was actively promoted as a desirable alternative to the fabrication of distorted truths unleashed by the Nazi radio. The BBC’s “claim to truthfulness,” Stephanie Seul argues, became an essential (and most likely also effective) “part of the British propaganda strategy,” one that was not to be jeopardized by offering the privileged position at the microphone to individuals whose political viewpoints or racial origins had forced them to flee Nazi Germany and who were, for these very same reasons, disqualified as objective commentators.²⁵ As a result, it was the names and voices of Richard Crossmann, Dennis Sefton Delmer, Lindley Fraser, or Hugh Carleton Greene that became practically synonymous with the BBC German Service during the war whereas expatriates who had enjoyed celebrity status in Weimar Germany—such as the actor Walter Rilla or the theater critic Alfred Kerr—hardly feature in contemporary accounts. Although German-speaking immigrants were busily preparing or translating scripts to be read by their British colleagues, wartime propaganda directives obliged the Corporation to obscure these behind-the-scenes, multicultural collaborations responsible for producing the neutral voice with which newsreaders addressed listeners in Germany.

In Mann's case, the question for BBC producers must have been whether her family connection to two of Germany's most celebrated contemporary writers, her father and her uncle Heinrich, could be harnessed for propaganda purposes. Would people in Germany actually want to listen to anything she had to say? Archival evidence suggests that the BBC initially decided against Mann, who was asked to speak anonymously when recording her first broadcast in 1940.²⁶ She obtained permission to use her name in her remaining talks but these early broadcasts continued to be problematic because they did not always fall in line with governmental propaganda directives. A surviving BBC memo from 1940, for instance, states, "We will, of course, cut out the 'Nazis' throughout, if this is not done at your end."²⁷ The BBC might have been inclined to distinguish between "the German people—supposedly despising the regime and longing for peace—and the warmongering Nazis," but Britain's Department EH (Electra House), responsible for propaganda to enemy countries, argued at the time that *all* Germans should be held accountable for Nazi atrocities (Seul, "Plain, Unvarnished News," 385). To ensure that German listeners could not consider themselves among the victims of Hitler's aggression, the BBC was asked to refrain from using the word "Nazi" in its German-language output.²⁸ Mann, however, must have misapplied the term, and this particular case of war-time censorship shows how much the BBC's diction remained a contested site for debates about the purpose and focus of British propaganda in the early 1940s. Because listeners in Germany might easily dismiss her talks as moral preaching, the Corporation's decision to use the voice of a well-known Nazi opponent in its German-language program was already controversial. To have Mann express categorical pronouncements about Germany's collective guilt, as requested by Department EH, might have further undermined the propaganda value of her broadcasts.

With only a small number of letters from listeners at hand, BBC employees were often forced to employ guesswork in their attempts to deliver an effective propaganda program while observing the Corporation's commitment to objective journalism, adjusting its broadcasting practices according to governmental propaganda directives, and also working on listeners in the hope of converting them into allies.²⁹ Mann, who was extremely keen to see to it that "the right people address that diseased nation in the right way," must have succeeded in adjusting to working routines at the BBC, as there were no more complaints about the content of her later talks. In fact, the scripts of her surviving broadcasts from 1941 illustrate how much she fell in line with BBC requirements. While she had used such categorical expressions as "comatose rabbits" and "mis-leader's serpent gaze" to describe the relationship between the German people and Hitler in her "Inside Germany" talk on July 30, 1941, the tone of her Trade Union Congress broadcast from September 4, 1941 is measured and factual. Although she emphatically reminds listeners that the British people unanimously supported the war, verbal diplomacy has now taken the place of fervid enthusiasm.³⁰ As such, Mann's professional association with the BBC in the early 1940s is best described as educational experience. Here, in the small, claustrophobic studios amid numerous other Nazi opponents, she was confronted with the challenges of an important British propaganda goal: the production of a steady, seemingly objective vocal output instantaneously recognizable as that of the BBC German Service (fig. 2).

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<A>**Mann's Work for the VOA in the United States**

These professional experiences were put to good use on the other side of the Atlantic. When addressing American citizens in her talks Mann often began by depicting Britain as Europe's last bastion of democracy: "The democratic way of living has survived the deadly onslaught aimed at its destruction," she concluded one lecture. "Has survived so far. But will it survive if England be allowed to remain its one and only militant defender, if she should be left alone singlehandedly to fight those determined to murder it?" (Mann, "Searchlight through the Blackout," 22). The United States had a moral obligation, Mann believed, to assist the United Kingdom in its struggle against fascism, and she stressed this point by presenting a version of heroic, democratic Britain that was not, in fact, quite in line with some of her actual experiences. An anecdote about her BBC work served to emphasize the image of British courage and stoicism in the face of mortal danger:

<EXT>I remember how once, during an air raid (to which we usually didn't pay much attention) I was rehearsing and timing a speech in the B.B.C. We were in one of the third-floor studios, and I described to my German listeners the effect of the indiscriminate bombing of London. Hitler was indeed very much mistaken, I asserted, if he thought he could virtually frighten the ENGLISH TO DEATH. The English could not be frightened: although the bombs did a great deal of harm and killed many human beings, they would not achieve their aim. At this moment a big huge thing whistled [*sic*] down nearby. We could not yet judge whether it was to hit our building, or one of the neighbouring houses. Both of us, the B.B.C. man with his stop watch and myself went down flat in a hurry. When the bomb had fallen, our building swayed like a tree in a storm and our windows were on the breaking point. We jumped to our feet, the B.B.C. man looked at his stop-watch and said with his quietest voice, "go ahead, we lost 5 seconds." I went on, telling

the Germans that their bombs couldn't frighten us a bit. Everyone would have done this. Everyone would have been ashamed to show any trace of fear or nervousness in the presence of a courage which took itself for granted and was not in the slightest proud of itself. (Mann, "Searchlight through the Blackout," 14–15)<EXT>

The described scene, involving the BBC man with his stop-watch exemplifying self-control and professional determination, reinforces the central claim of Mann's talk to German listeners:

Hitler's bombs will not beat the British into submission. But the reported incident was also used as propaganda material in her lecture to US citizens who needed convincing that stoic, courageous Britain should be assisted by America's entry into the war. At this point, Mann clearly withheld critical remarks about the kind of institutional racism she had witnessed at the BBC, remarks that would come to the fore in her short story "That Burning Sky."

Mann also drew on her experiences at the BBC when the United States declared war on the Axis Powers in December 1941. The Office of the Coordinator of Information, which was responsible for foreign intelligence and propaganda work, was put in charge of setting up an overseas broadcasting service, the Voice of America (VOA), in February 1942, and Mann was hired as a consultant. In her report "Broadcasting to German Women" (1942) she reminded VOA producers that "Germans listening to our broadcasts are risking their lives by doing so. . . . We should never forget that a German comedian who dares to poke fun at the Nazis from a Munich stage, bravely endangers himself, while not endangering his audience. We endanger our audience, while not endangering ourselves. That is," Mann concluded, "the decisive difference."³¹ As she would have learned in London, Germans who tuned in to so-called enemy stations could pay for this offence with long prison sentences, possibly even with their lives.³² Indeed, against opposition from colleagues, Carl Brinitzer, one of the translator/announcers in

the BBC German Service, had patented the “Bri-style”—a new broadcasting technique that aimed to increase comprehension by paring down sentences to bare essentials.³³ For him and his supporters, this issue was essential because listeners in Germany, for fear of discovery, were frequently obliged to decrease the volume of radios to barely audible levels. Because these listeners risked prosecution, brevity and precision were to be privileged over grammatical structures. In the scripting of the news, Brinitzer argued, content delivery was all that mattered—even if it meant that information was packaged into prose that defied syntactic conventions. Mann concurred, recommending that in American German-language broadcasts “[i]t will be better to say *less* than to alienate our audiences by saying lots of things many of which fail to justify the danger involved” (“Broadcasting to German Women,” 1).

When making recommendations about the delivery of the “four main types of broadcasts” she considered important—“simple, uncommented newscasts,” “objective commentaries,” “personal talks, . . . given by well-known personalities,” and, finally, “features,” which are “scenes, sketches, presentations of a literary or musical character, parodies, imitations (of Hitler, for instance)” —she similarly relied on her experiences with British broadcasting as these were exactly the kind of programs the BBC German Service had already established (1–2). Mann’s suggestions as to content were also based on existing BBC broadcasts: “The happenings of German every-day-life should be our subject,” she proposed, and it is possible that she was thinking of the successful “Frau Wernicke” programs that the BBC had transmitted since July 1940 (3). These were satirical sketches delivered by an ostensibly patriotic, “down-to-earth Berlin housewife, speaking a very particular and humorous kind of Berlin slang, set out to instill some home truths to German audiences about the impending consequences” of a prolonged war.³⁴ Like the “Frau Wernicke” features, US broadcasts for women, Mann recommended,

should “concentrate on tangible, practical themes,” on “any human interest-story, anything we consider to be disturbing, disquieting, alarming to our female audiences” that could be unearthed through the “study of the German press” (“Broadcasting to German Women,” 3).

Mann’s recommendations most explicitly, and most problematically, echo BBC protocols when she states that the suggested “personal talks should be made, either, by Americans (whose accent will be acceptable as long as they can be easily understood), or by some few, very outstanding, preferably non-Jewish Germans (or Europeans) who, however, should never have been too closely connected with any of the bankrupt Weimar-parties” (4). Here, Mann clearly recalls the BBC’s fear that its objectivity might be compromised by broadcasters whose neutrality could be questioned. In case this proposition should be misconstrued as racist, however, Mann belatedly added a hand-written note to her script that clarifies her position: “It goes without saying that we are not suggesting that Hitler’s game should be played and Jews be excluded. For merely tactical reasons,” she argues, “the percentage of Jewish contributions should be kept within certain limits” (4). There can be no doubt that Mann hoped to model American programs directly on BBC formulas—even in cases when a questionably exclusive rhetoric determined the strategic mandates of these Allied broadcasts to Germany.

Given Mann’s own part-Jewish background, such unconditional support of broadcasting practices built on a logic of discrimination must appear surprising. What is worth noting at this juncture, however, is that Mann’s recommendations about the voices to be used for on-air commentary supported a notion of objectivity that could be harnessed for propaganda purposes. As her involvement with BBC broadcasting would have shown her, radio personnel in Britain aspired to a semblance of authenticity in broadcasting that could be propagandistically juxtaposed with the patently distorted news programs disseminated by Nazi-occupied stations.³⁵

It was for practical, not ideological, reasons, Mann argued, that certain voices should be heard only intermittently on Allied frequencies. In order to be successful in creating a convincing broadcasting voice, her memo suggests, American programs would have to adopt the BBC's emphasis on objectivity in newscasting. Unfortunately, this also meant that VOA personnel had to accept aspects of fascism's discriminatory logic in the hope of producing German-language broadcasts that would work well as effective counterpropaganda.

Mann's detailed ten-page memo, which includes editorial as well as technical suggestions for program arrangements, clearly shows her commitment to the task at hand. Her work as consultant for the Office of the Coordinator of Information was nonetheless short-lived. In a letter addressed to the playwright Robert E. Sherwood, who was coordinating American overseas propaganda services at the time, Mann, in March 1942, announced her resignation from the post of VOA advisor because, she complained, she had not been given responsibilities that matched her experiences. Although she had been asked to write "a few pieces" for the "short-wave programme," her strong commitment to fighting the Nazis made her reluctant to draw, as she explained, "a handsome salary from the government" without ensuring "either as a writer, or as a producer, actress, or broadcaster" that these broadcasts were effective.³⁶ Mann also reminded Sherwood that she was "too familiar with the situation in Germany and German-occupied countries, as not to realize the futility of the short-wave enterprise" for which she had been commissioned to write. There "exist only five groups of people who possess short wave receivers" in Germany, she stated, a fact she had "repeatedly pointed out" (Mann to Sherwood, 1). These are "Nazi officials, big industrialists, air-men, navy-men, and radio-professionals," and for that reason it seems "a hopeless enterprise" "to write short-wave-propaganda for the German middle classes" or "talk . . . to Germany's women via short-wave" as these listeners owned the

pecially designed “Volksempfänger” (“People’s Set”), which could not receive programs on short-wave frequencies (1–2). To “devote one’s time and strength to the making of ‘propaganda’ which cannot be heard,” Mann concluded, “is sadder than to write poetry exclusively for one’s own drawers” (2).

Needless to say, these US broadcasts were not as futile as Mann believed—especially because problems relating to short-wave transmission were soon solved in collaboration with the BBC.³⁷ Mann’s harsh language about VOA short-wave broadcasts might therefore seem over-hasty. But it is worth pointing out that her interest in issues relating to psychological warfare started to wane when the United States declared war on the Axis powers because, she believed, America’s entry into the war would inevitably bring about an Allied victory. From then on, Mann’s journalism began to intervene in debates about the political reconstruction of Germany and the Allies’ responsibility in safeguarding stability in Europe and elsewhere.³⁸ It is also in these later pieces from the war years that critique of liberal governments is more candidly and more frequently expressed than in her previously written journalism. As an Allied victory became foreseeable, Mann’s erstwhile support of Western democracies became far less unconditional than it had been during the early war years when Nazi Germany had the upper hand in the military struggle. In fact, before the American declaration of war, Mann expressed her criticism of institutional structures in western democracies most directly in her unpublished short story “That Burning Sky.”³⁹ Here, she could interrogate her alliance with administrative structures in Allied nations that, she believed, were in urgent need of reform. This critically neglected manuscript therefore illustrates the dual loyalties of this modernist intellectual who realized that contemporary events demanded the support of policies and administrative procedures that problematically obscured the complexities involved in developing Britain’s most

audible propaganda narrative: the BBC's insistence on objectivity in broadcasting, described by one, perhaps over-credulous, contemporary observer as the Corporation's aim to "inspire confidence by a strict adherence to the truth."⁴⁰

<A>**Background Noise: "That Burning Sky"**

"That Burning Sky" is a story about things that cannot be said, about voices that are silenced or cannot be heard. Early on, Mann identifies these issues as the narrative's principal concerns when she introduces her protagonist Bob Stanhope and his work, which is centrally concerned with revoking an individual's authority to speak: as switch censor in the BBC German unit he can interrupt programs immediately if broadcasters deviate in any way from agreed-upon scripts.⁴¹ While listening to the news, Stanhope contemplates those "enemy aliens" who have decided to "help the foe of their country."⁴² "They are ok," he concludes, especially "Count Alfred von Neudeck," a German aristocrat who "could have become a Nazi bigwig" had his anti-Nazi stance not forced him to leave the country (Mann, "That Burning Sky," 1, 4). "Alf" is now newsreader in the BBC German Service, where he is well-liked and he soon replaces Bob Stanhope as the story's focalizer. The reader follows him through the labyrinthine corridors of Broadcasting House, where Alf, we learn, hopes to discuss improvements in the delivery of the news with his supervisor. It can be surmised that Mann was at this point referencing the "Bri-style" debate that took place when she was making her guest appearances at the BBC. We then accompany Alf home and encounter his girlfriend, an English woman called Alice Sloane, whom he passionately loves and with whom he discusses her work as lorry driver for the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).

When Alf returns to the BBC in the evening of the following day, disaster has struck: Zach Fisch, a Jewish-German immigrant and feature announcer, has died somewhere in London the previous night while saving a child from a burning house. While staff members of the German region are still processing the news of their colleague's death, an announcer in an adjacent studio begins to describe an attack on an ATS depot that has destroyed hundreds of vehicles and killed most of the "girl-drivers" (25). To his horror, Alf must find out from the Home Service news reader that "Junior Commander Alice Sloane" is among those killed (25). Overwhelmed by grief, he is unable to keep up his cover and the final passages of "That Burning Sky" unmask him as a traitor who used his broadcasts to pass on "vital information, fatal information" to the Nazis. In this particular case, he must have conveyed information about ATS activities previously obtained from Alice (27). "I should have known," Stanhope tells himself: "His strange intonations! His stressing of words! His pauses! His coughing! His personal versions of our bulletins! Codes all of it, slimy codes" (27). Alf, it transpires, was certainly not the right person to address listeners in Germany.

Because of its detailed description of working life at the Corporation, "That Burning Sky" is essential reading for anyone interested in the BBC European Services during World War II. Mann depicts the linguistic babel in corridors and other communal spaces, she captures the claustrophobic atmosphere in recording studios "five floors under the ground," and she also describes the effect of exploding bombs on live broadcasting while giving readers a sense of the crowdedness of the concert hall that is repurposed each night as a dormitory for those employees who work late shifts and do not want to go home during air raids (1, 4, 22a). By representing these behind-the-scene operations at the BBC in such detail, the story makes apparent its interest in giving credit to individuals at work in the Corporation whose voices and biographies would

remain mostly unknown to listeners. Mann also emphasizes the polyglot nature of BBC working routines, as Alf observes how “the Norwegians and the Rumanians, the Dutsch [*sic*] and the Czechs, the English and the Germans, the Portuguese and the Hungarians discussed their propaganda-war in which they were engaged, much as a huge international general staff might discuss their moves on the battlefield. The low room was filled with smoke and the sound of voices talking in some twenty languages” (6a).

These realist components are placed alongside plot features more commonly found in a spy story. Mann would have known, of course, that a case as the one depicted could not have occurred, that someone like Alf could not have passed on classified information to the enemy by adding rhetorical flourishes to the news while broadcasting. It was the job of the switch censor (Stanhope, in the story) to prevent such things from happening. As a result, “That Burning Sky” sits awkwardly between narrative registers and, in this manner, indicates Mann’s wish to represent the complexity of everyday life at the BBC at a moment when propaganda narratives demanded the translation of socio-cultural diversity into easily categorized abstractions. The war with Germany, as Stanhope’s reflections on “friendly enemy aliens” suggest, made it a requirement to classify individuals according to ideological taxonomies. Mann’s story acknowledges the wartime need to typecast individuals in this manner but it also insists on representing diversity by accommodating very different literary genres within the same textual frame. Moreover, “That Burning Sky” is also a many-voiced narrative in which externally focused passages are frequently interrupted by paragraphs that represent the perspectives of very different characters through the use of free indirect discourse or interior monologue. Stanhope, Alf, even Alice, have the chance to contribute their voices to the make-up of a story that makes polyvocality one of its building blocks.⁴³

Passages in which Alf emerges as the focalizer demand particular attention because the story's espionage intertext references the broader field of wartime intelligence in which the BBC's working practices were very firmly embedded. The BBC Monitoring Service provided Britain's intelligence sector with information and, as the case of the expunged "Nazi" references on Mann's broadcasting script has already shown, propaganda delivery by the Corporation was closely supervised by governmental organizations tasked with intelligence gathering abroad. Contemporaries might not have been fully aware that partly overlapping concerns connected the BBC to these governmental bodies, but Mann's story deliberately uses the image of the spy to show how much the work of creating the BBC's broadcasting voice resembled covert intelligence operations. Both wartime broadcasting practices and wartime intelligence work, in other words, are brought together in her protagonist's profile. Indeed, his role as secret agent, it becomes apparent with hindsight, is already formally indexed in the story. Whenever he is in danger of considering his intelligence work, Alf carefully edits his thoughts. It is because of these gaps in the narrative, in fact, that first-time readers remain unaware that he had tried to ensure that Alice would be absent from the ATS depot on the day of the Luftwaffe attack:

<EXT>Time passes slowly that afternoon; in fact, Alf found it hard to get it over with. He went to a movy [*sic*] and saw some news reels which reminded him of Alice: not that he needed to be reminded: but those A.T.S. girls on the screen made her absence almost unbearable. "I love her" he thought in German, "Ich liebe sie." Where was she now? Still at the depot, or already enroute [*sic*] to the dance? It hurt to think of the dance, despite . . . Despite what? Don't think too much! He admonished himself but his mind kept on working feverishly. (Mann, "That Burning Sky," 21)<EXT>

The elliptic narrative foregrounds his personal rather than political concerns and encourages readers to trust Alf, the spy, just as his co-workers remain oblivious to his political loyalties.

However, Alf's heavily edited thoughts can also be compared to a news script that has been returned by the censor in a revised, abridged version. BBC wartime censorship practices, as the early reference to Stanhope's work illustrates, are a central concern of Mann's story and this is further emphasized when Alf's conversation with his supervisor about the production of the Corporation's German-language output alludes a second time to the work of the censor.

Although his line-manager agrees to concede Alf more responsibility in correcting incoming scripts "to make the darn thing[s] speakable," it is also made clear that the censor "would have to see . . . scripts after [Alf has] made . . . alterations" (8). Passages such as this one reference the editorial interventions responsible for delivering the BBC's seemingly authentic and objective news bulletins. In this manner, Mann's story covertly alludes to the complex, frequently obscured mechanisms involved in the production of trustworthy appearances on which the success of the BBC's transnational broadcasts as part of Britain's wartime intelligence work had come to depend. In providing one of her protagonists with a dual identity as a Nazi spy and BBC announcer, Mann also illustrates that structural similarities existed between the believable composition of the spy's adopted persona and the broadcast's success in feigning reality. In both of his adopted parts, Alf is immersed in information production systems that rely on carefully concealing the processes through which authentic appearance is projected.

The realist and spy thriller elements of Mann's story thus work in concert to consider some of the background operations of Britain's propaganda war that had to remain hidden to be effective. But writing "That Burning Sky" was also important for Mann because this unpublished story allowed her to critique institutional structures in western democracies at a time when she

was carefully maintaining her public persona as a war correspondent uncritically supportive of the Allies. At the end of the story, Stanhope voices concerns that resemble Mann's own, hitherto unarticulated fears that democratic values are frequently sidelined in Allied nations. Even at the BBC, that highly visible spearhead of British democracy, a lingering class bias is shown to be responsible for producing ideological convictions that are difficult to challenge and that will, Stanhope realizes, threaten democracy's victory over totalitarianism. Why, he wonders, are we always "investigating the wrong people," "trusting the wrong crowd"? While Fisch, who dies a hero's death in the flames, had been "most thoroughly investigated" by the authorities before beginning his work for the BBC and while another co-worker is suspected of being a Communist simply because, in Stanhope's words, he is "a simple fellow whose fingernails aren't even always clean," the aristocratic Neudeck passed muster because of his impressive pedigree and confident appearance (27). A lot needs to change, Stanhope recognizes, before democratic principles can flourish everywhere in postwar Europe: "some of us Britishers [*sic*] or Americans or whatever 'Democrates' [*sic*] we are, are still nationalists and imperialists and racists and snobs, who don't know an ally when they see him; or even mistrust him, 'cause he's a Jew or a simple fellow; but fall for a rat like Neudeck, 'cause he comes from their own nationalistic, imperialist, racist and snobbish background" (27-28). "That's what it is," he concludes. "And that's what we've got to get rid of, all of us, lest we'll loose [*sic*] out in the end" (28).

Mann herself had begun to suspect, during her time as a lecturer in the United States, that intolerant, even authoritarian thinking and aggression against dissenters were problems by no means exclusive to Nazi Germany. Many of her American listeners were unprepared, if not unwilling, to confront the real menace of Nazism. Non-interventionists accused her of warmongering and those overtly sympathetic to Hitler slipped notes with death threats into her

hands (Von der Lühe, *Erika Mann*, 210). In Britain, meanwhile, Mann observed that her “progressive, ~~intellectual, originally pacifist, moderately socialist~~ English writer-friends—formerly pacifist all of them, with a socialist flavour” warned her that her determination to go ahead and interview Lord Vansittart, the author of a controversial book on Germany’s collective guilt, would make them “rather cross” and force them “to attack [her] in one of [their] more decent publications.”⁴⁴ Even if they disagreed with her and believed that Vansittart’s plea for a “deprussianized,” systematically “re-educated, rather than punished” Nazi Germany should remain unheeded, these “progressive” “English writer-friends,” Mann remarks suggest, should be criticized because they aim to silence her unorthodox views (“No Gift to Goebbels,” 11, 12). In a liberal democracy, the kind of “peaceful, sensibly organized, decent world” Mann envisioned, the expression of minority views should be encouraged (12). Most certainly, dissenting voices should be heard rather than suppressed by threats.

Mann, that is to say, was convinced that even democratic countries needed to examine their political structures so that peaceful relations among nations could be established. “In order to win this war,” she had more cautiously written in 1940, “democracy will have to undergo certain changes,” so as to “alter and better conditions within our individual democratic countries” and to “greatly change and improve the relation-ship of democratic countries between each others [*sic*].” The development of a better world order, she believed, required that democracy “must not only conquer the enemy but also its own weakness and the outworn notions that have made it weak” (Mann, “Searchlight through the Blackout,” 20). During the early years of the war, however, these convictions remained mostly muted. “That Burning Sky,” however, allowed Mann to critically consider her professional entanglement with a propaganda narrative that

excluded experiences and voices in its pursuit of an objectivity that had become an undisputable universal because it was accepted as a synonym for moral superiority.

<A>**Mann's Postwar Articulations**

Wartime conditions were instrumental in expanding transnational broadcasting practices in Allied nations. Radio acquired unprecedented significance as a propaganda tool, but the Allies also regarded it as an educational facilitator that could help establish a new, democratic social order in post-totalitarian nations. It is no coincidence that Hugh Greene, who had been Head of the BBC German Service since 1941, was commissioned with setting up the new media landscape in the British Zone in 1946.⁴⁵ Fact-based journalism, information, and education—those central tenets of BBC wartime broadcasting—were meant to shape the organization of public service broadcasting in postwar Germany and prevent another totalitarian takeover.

Erika Mann, this article has demonstrated, made foreign-language broadcasting an important aspect of her politically motivated war-time work. In the hope of bringing about Nazi Germany's defeat, she worked for the BBC and acknowledged the important propaganda function of its German-language output. She also temporarily advised those in charge of setting up German-language broadcasts in the United States. But Mann's voice gradually lost influence in post-war debates about Germany's political and cultural reconstruction.⁴⁶ With the end of the war came the disappointing realization that her hopes for a cohesive, democratic world order would remain unfulfilled. Neither in Europe nor the United States did Mann see structures emerging that she considered productive for the development of cooperative international relations. Increasingly, she would retreat from public view, focusing instead on her responsibilities as her father's secretary and editor and on curating the cultural legacy of her

brother Klaus, who had committed suicide in 1949. For this political radical, the postwar era did not deliver the possibilities envisaged only a few years earlier. Germans, rather than being thoroughly re-educated, were allowed to side with either of the two emerging rival superpowers fighting for hegemony in Europe.⁴⁷ The chance for a proper denazification of the country, Mann believed, had been missed.

During the war, however, the German-language broadcasts initiated by the BBC helped Mann to cement her reputation as an internationally recognized war correspondent. And what her case can show is that the development of wartime broadcasting was based on professional collaborations between creative minds coming from different national, professional, and political backgrounds. Her fictional account of the BBC's wartime operations provides particularly vivid depictions of those human agents—individuals such as producers, translators, editors, announcers, or switch censors—who played their part in the creation of political propaganda disseminated by wireless technology. But as Mann's involvement with foreign-language broadcasting also evidences, these temporary associations between individuals and institutions were not free from complications. Rather, these Allied projects were born out of productive tensions between abstract governmental directives and actual contributions, the result of negotiations among individuals with very different political visions who were nonetheless (temporarily) united in their conviction that speaking the right words in the right context could bring about much-needed political change.

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¹ Radio, Adorno and Horkheimer argued in 1944, “turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programs which are all exactly the same.” It enforces, through “totalitarian advertising” “the general lines of culture” (Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming [London: Verso, 1992], 122, 165).

² The new German government had appropriated the national airwaves immediately after Hitler’s takeover. On March 13, 1933 the Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda came into being and soon took control of disseminating the regime’s political ideologies over the wireless. To strengthen his broadcasting monopoly, Joseph Goebbels authorized the production of an inexpensive radio set, the “Volksempfänger” (“People’s Set”), which could tune in to regional stations via medium wave, and the national station, *Deutschlandsender (Radio Germany)*, via long wave but which prevented listeners from receiving the short-wave transmissions issued by foreign broadcasters. It is estimated that by January 1938 every second household in Germany was in possession of a *Volksempfänger* (Horst J. P. Bergmeier and Rainer E. Lotz, *Hitler’s*

Airwaves: The Inside Story of Nazi Broadcasting and Propaganda Swing [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997], 5–6).

³ For a discussion of “Lord Haw-Haw,” see M. A. Doherty, *Nazi Wireless Propaganda: Lord Haw-Haw and British Public Opinion in the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 87–125. Doherty describes the systematic expansion of Germany’s foreign-language broadcasts: “short-wave services were begun in German and English” as early as 1933, “consisting mostly of news bulletins about Germany” that were “aimed primarily at the United States. A Spanish Service was begun in 1933 and a Portuguese one in 1937. . . . By January 1940, Germany was broadcasting news in twenty-two languages, as compared with the BBC’s fourteen, while by 1943 transmissions were being made in fifty-three languages compared with the BBC’s fifty-four” (*Nazi Wireless Propaganda*, 5, 7).

⁴ As one contemporary observer pessimistically noted, “broadcasting, instead of developing into an agency for peace and better international understanding, serves often to incite hatred throughout the world, and is often used, for motives which obviously are not disinterested, and by men in conflict, to dominate, rather than to enlighten, the public mind” (Thomas Gradin, *The Political Use of the Radio* [New York: Arno Press, 1971], 7).

⁵ Ian Whittington, “Radio Studies and Twentieth-Century Literature: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Remediation,” *Literature Compass* 11, no. 9 (2014): 634–48, 642.

⁶ Ian Whittington, *Writing the Radio War: Literature, Politics and the BBC, 1939–1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 16.

⁷ Damien Keane argues that critical attention to the advent of such mediating practices as “[t]ranscription, recording, collation, redaction, translation, rediffusion,” which “were transforming the contours and coordinates of the late modernist field into those recognized in

today's 'information age,'" would also require the reconsideration of established notions about "the privileged place still frequently accorded to isolated, individual authors, works and 'voices'" in modernist scholarship (*Ireland and the Problem of Information: Irish Writing, Radio, Late Modernism* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014], 8).

⁸ Erika Mann and Wedekind were lovers, as were Gründgens and Klaus, but Klaus and Wedekind were also engaged while Gründgens and Erika Mann entered a short-lived marriage in 1926. See Irmela von der Lühe, *Erika Mann: Eine Lebensgeschichte* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2009); Andrea Weiss, *In the Shadow of the Magic Mountain: The Erika and Klaus Mann Story* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

⁹ Klaus Mann, *The Turning Point* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1987), 137–38, 142–43.

¹⁰ Mann's MI5 file suggests that this marriage to Auden was the reason why her request to work as a journalist in London was approved. See the record of a telephone conversation between officials at MI5 and the Ministry of Information, August 26, 1940, Security Files, KV 2/2588, The National Archives, Kew.

¹¹ Mann's articles documenting conditions during the Spanish Civil War were published in the New York-based, German-language newspaper *Neue Volks-Zeitung* in 1938. They have been reprinted in Erika Mann, *Blitze überm Ozean: Aufsätze, Reden, Reportagen*, ed. Irmela von der Lühe and Uwe Naumann (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2000), 135–67.

¹² The "Nazi child," Mann writes, "attends a Nazi school; he belongs to a Nazi youth organization; the movies he is allowed to see are Nazi films. His whole life, without any reservation, belongs to the Nazi State" (Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians: Education under the Nazis* [New York: Modern Age Books, 1938], 19).

¹³ This is not to suggest that Mann did not produce more literary texts in those years. Indeed, in 1940 she published *The Lights Go Down*, a collection of stories about life in Nazi Germany and two years later she wrote another children's book, *A Gang of Ten*, to be added to those she had written in German in the early 1930s. But these creative pieces also made critical engagement with the war their inspiration.

¹⁴ Erika Mann to Duff Cooper, May 16, 1940, Münchner Stadtbibliothek, Monacensia, Munich, shelf mark EM B 446.

¹⁵ In a letter to a friend, Mann reported that she gave nine broadcasts in 1940 (*Erika Mann: Briefe und Antworten, 1922–1950*, ed. Anna Zanco Prestel [München: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1988], 158–59). However, records in the BBC Written Archives Centre only show evidence of seven Mann talks that were recorded and broadcast that year. Dates and titles of Mann's BBC broadcasts are as follows: "America" (September 6, 1940, 1:30 pm); "The Young Barbarians" (September 13, 1940, 1:30 pm); "Raids on London" (September 24, 1940, 1:30 pm); "London War Bombs" (September 29, 1940, 9:30 pm); "Questions and Answers" (October 6, 1940, 12:30 pm); "Better v. Worse" (October 11, 1940, 1:30 pm); "Goodbye London" (October 14, 1940, 9:15 pm); "London then and now" (July 13, 1941, 6:00 pm); "America and the Russian War" (July 20, 1941, 1:00 pm); "Inside Germany" (July 30, 1941, 12:00 noon, manuscript available); "On a Speed Boat" (August 3, 1941, 8:00 pm); "The Battle of the Atlantic" (August 6, 1941, 12:00 noon); "A Question to Austria" (August 15, 1941, 9:00 pm); "Australia" (August 23, 1941, 12:00 noon, manuscript available); "The Trades Union Congress" (September 4, 1941, 12:00 noon, manuscript available); "Erika Mann to Austria" (July 2, 1943, 11:00 pm); "The Changed Face of London," "The Spirit of the English,"

“Production 1941–1932 [*sic*],” “Post War Planning” (July 9, 1943, 10:00 pm). Erika Mann
Source File 1, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham

¹⁶ See Thomas Mann, *Deutsche Hörer! Radiosendungen nach Deutschland aus den Jahren 1940–1945* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2013); *Listen, Germany! Twenty-Five Radio Messages to the German People over the BBC* (New York: Knopf, 1943). For a discussion of Thomas Mann’s broadcasts to Germany see Melissa Dinsman, *Modernism at the Microphone: Radio, Propaganda, and Literary Aesthetics during World War II* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 145–70; Surviving typescripts of Erika Mann’s broadcasts are reprinted in J. F. Slatterly, “Erika Mann und die BBC 1940–1943,” *Thomas Mann Jahrbuch* 12 (1999): 310–47, 330–33, 341–42.

¹⁷ Erika Mann, “Searchlight through the Blackout,” Münchner Stadtbibliothek, Monacensia, Munich, shelf mark EM M 158, 26–27.

¹⁸ In 1939, a BBC Monitoring Service was set up by the British government to gather foreign intelligence. Monitors, who were often immigrants with outstanding linguistic skills, listened in to, recorded, summarised, and translated foreign radio broadcasts. Digests were then sent to different governmental organisation and frequently provided the BBC with inspiration for its own foreign-language broadcasts.

¹⁹ Summary of World Broadcasts, Daily Digest of Foreign Broadcasts, Part 1 (Transmissions from Germany and German-Occupied Territory), No. 440, 21, *Deutschlandsender* (Germany) in German for Germany, September 30, 1940, 9:00 pm, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham. Mann’s archive in Munich also contains an undated transcript of this broadcast (shelf mark EM M 237).

²⁰ “Life under Airraid [*sic*] in London: Erika Mann in Conversation with Johannes Steele,” October 31, 1940, Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, Frankfurt (am Main), B007128976 (audio file).

On September 30, 1940—the same day on which the *Deutschlandsender* issued a German counter-statement to Mann’s talk (see previous note)—Radio Hamburg also broadcast an English talk, “Scandal of London’s Air Raids,” that explicitly referenced Mann’s talk of the previous day. The speaker accuses Mann of insincerity and of diminishing the suffering of Londoners: “Speaking in the language which the ordinary Londoner does not understand she says that the sirens are welcomed when they sound the alarm, as the Londoners consider them to be a fanfare and a victory, announcing the loss of so many German machines. And as to the flares which are dropped they are just too sweet and charming. People enjoy hunting for them. This description of rainbow chasing during air raids,” the broadcast continues, “is just a little bit too much for even the most credulous. I sincerely hope that English listeners will note and mark well this grotesque effusion of the unseemly renegade, Erica [*sic*] Mann, for it shows the heartless cynicism with which England’s rulers regard the fate of their people” (Summary of World Broadcasts, Daily Digest of Foreign Broadcasts, Part 1 [Transmissions from Germany and German-Occupied Territory], No. 440, 35, Zeesen [Hamburg Group], in English for England, September 30, 1940, 9:30 pm, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham). It can be assumed that this is the response from “Lord Haw-Haw” to which Mann refers in her conversation with Steele.

²¹ See an internal memo from August 29, 1940, Erika Mann Source File 1, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, as well as Slattery, “Erika Mann und die BBC,” 311–12.

²² Report No. Allied/CD/30, January 9, 1944, Countries: Germany, German Service, Comments on BBC German Service, 1943–1945, EI/755, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham.

²³ Gerard Mansell, *Let Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 155.

²⁴ See also Gunda Cannon, *“Hier ist England”—“Live aus London”: Das Deutsche Programm der British Broadcasting Corporation, 1938–1988* (London: BBC, 1988), 6.

²⁵ Stephanie Seul, “‘Plain, Unvarnished News’? The BBC German Service and Chamberlain’s Propaganda Campaign Directed at Nazi Germany, 1938–1940,” *Media History* 21, no. 4 (2015): 378–96, 383.

²⁶ It is unclear what happened with Mann’s first BBC broadcast. On September 2, 1940, the Joint Planning and Broadcasting Committee set up by the Foreign Office to vet BBC scripts for transmissions to Nazi Germany had decided that a submitted talk by Mann “was not good enough to be broadcast” and should certainly not be “put over by Erika Mann under her own name.” The minutes for the meeting on September 6, 1940, however, record that “through a misunderstanding Miss Erika Mann had broadcast under her own name” that afternoon and “that in her next broadcast she should also be permitted to use her own name.” See minutes for the 20th and 23th Meeting of the General Discussion Committee, Monday, September 2 and Friday, September 6, 1940, FO 898/8, The National Archives, Kew.

²⁷ Internal memo, October 5, 1940, Erika Mann Source File 1, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham.

²⁸ Kristina Moorehead, *Satire als Kriegswaffe: Strategien der britischen Rundfunkpropaganda im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Marburg: Tectum, 2016), 68, 108.

²⁹ Of these letters, only those from 1943–45 have survived. See German Service: Comments on BBC German Service 1943–1945, EI/755, BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham.

³⁰ See Slattery, “Erika Mann und die BBC,” 341–42 for these two talks.

³¹ Erika Mann, “Broadcasting to German Women,” Münchner Stadtbibliothek, Monacensia, Munich, shelf mark EM M 27, 1. Although the typescript is not dated, I have been able to

establish its composition date by information provided in the text: Mann describes the emotional life of a German mother who writes in and refers to earlier passages in her diary. In these comments, the “22 February” is identified as “today,” and Mann’s subject looks back to an entry made a year earlier when “Roosevelt’s Lend-Lease-programme” was “without a chance.” The lend-lease policy was enacted on March 11, 1941 so the earlier diary entry must be from February 1941, which would make “the present day” February 22, 1942.

³² “Your listener has, by merely turning a switch, the power to enforce your silence and to ensure for himself a continued existence,” explained a contemporary observer, when discussing the offense of tuning in to “enemy broadcasts” that was punished with increasing severity by the Nazis. “[H]e will use that switch if you forget that relationship of life and death that stands between you” (E. Tangye Lean, *Voices in the Darkness: The Story of the European Radio War* [London: Secker and Warburg, 1943], 46).

³³ Carl Brinitzer, *Hier spricht London: Von einem der dabei war* (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1969), 145–46. Even though he began introducing these broadcasting practices as early as 1940, Brinitzer’s propositions were only adopted for all German-language news broadcasts in 1942 after Hugh Carleton Greene returned from a visit to Stockholm where he had tested the reception quality of programs. See Cannon, “*Hier ist England*,” 9–10.

³⁴ Rhys W. Williams, “‘Frau Wernicke’ at the BBC,” in *Diasporas and Diplomacy: Cosmopolitan Contact Zones at the BBC World Service (1932–2012)*, ed. Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb (London: Routledge, 2013), 57.

³⁵ See Mark Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 21–22 for a discussion of the BBC’s so-called “propaganda of truth.”

³⁶ Erika Mann to Robert E. Sherwood, March 5, 1942, Münchner Stadtbibliothek, Monacensia, Munich, shelf mark EM B 1334. Interestingly, in a letter to her father, Mann is extremely dismissive of this consultancy work, explaining that she “patiently agrees to be misemployed to deliver to the ‘Coordinator’ a few ‘women’s items’ every day, which are only fit to be placed into a women’s magazine, not in front of a war radio microphone” (Mann, *Briefe und Antworten, 1922–1950*, 181, translation mine).

³⁷ As a member of the Princeton Listening Center informed readers in a 1943 study, US broadcasts played an important role in “the democratic political offensive against Hitler,” “[e]xploiting for the first time the strategic possibilities of democratic co-operation on the radio front” through “arrangements with the British Broadcasting Corporation to have a number of U.S. short-wave transmissions relayed from England to the Continent on the standard waveband” (C. J. Rolo, *Radio Goes to War* [London: Faber and Faber, 1943], 194).

³⁸ These include, for instance, the articles “First Interview with Lord Vansittart,” *Vogue*, January 1, 1942, 60–61; “The Powder Keg of Palestine,” *Liberty Magazine*, January 8, 1944, 58–59; “The Future—As Benes Sees it,” *The Star Weekly*, August 12, 1944, 14.

³⁹ The typescript is not dated, but the name of one of its protagonists, Bob Stanhope, is identical to that of an Englishman who was befriended by Mann during her return journey to the United States via Lisbon in the autumn of 1941. It is most likely, therefore, that she drafted the story in that year. See Mann, “Searchlight through the Blackout,” 23. However, the fact that the text refers to “Broadcasting House” as the seat of the BBC German Service suggests that the story is set in 1940 before a Luftwaffe attack on October, 15 forced the European Services to move, in December 1940, to the BBC’s Maida Vale site and, from there, to Bush House in March 1941.

⁴⁰ “What We Are Broadcasting to Germany,” *Radio Pictorial*, December 15, 1939.

⁴¹ A contemporary describes the work of the switch censor in the following manner: “After lessons learned from fifth-column activity in Europe, the B.B.C. is taking no chances. . . . [F]or all European broadcasts a second person sits beside the speakers to make sure that no private messages or information to the enemy can be slipped into a censored script” (Rolo, *Radio Goes to War*, 114).

⁴² Erika Mann, “That Burning Sky,” Münchner Stadtbibliothek, Monacensia, Munich, shelf mark EM M 162, 1. The manuscript contains thirty-one typewritten, consecutively numbered pages (1–28) with three inserts (6a, 22a, 23a). It is heavily annotated, showing that Mann must have revised it several times. It remains unclear why she never published the story. During the war, censorship regulations affecting BBC work obviously prevented her from speaking publicly about her experiences at the Corporation. Even after the end of the war, Mann might have felt bound to honor this agreement. Alternatively, the story’s rootedness in a particular historical context might have made it seem irrelevant to Mann in the postwar period when she was concerned with other (literary) projects.

⁴³ The appearance of Mann’s script further signals the story’s interest in describing the polyvocality of the BBC’s war-time operations. Although it is written in English, German-language sentences appear throughout whenever the utterances of German-language broadcasts are represented verbatim. Given the fact that “That Burning Sky” is an unfinished draft, it also retains some German-language expressions in places where Mann was unsure about appropriate English idioms that she had intended to check later on, e.g. “Alf Neudeck finished his last sentence, without (mit der Wimper zu zucken?)” (5).

⁴⁴ Erika Mann, “No Gift to Goebbels: Lord Vansittart Gives the First Interview of his Life,” Münchner Stadtbibliothek, Monacensia, Munich, shelf mark EM M175, 1.

⁴⁵ See Hans-Ulrich Wagner, “Repatriated Germans and ‘British Spirit’: The Transfer of Public Service Broadcasting to Northern Post-War Germany (1945–1950),” *Media History* 21, no. 4 (2015): 443–58.

⁴⁶ There also existed little contact between Mann and the BBC German Service in these years, and even these few exchanges dealt exclusively with the organization of broadcasts relating to her father’s work. See BBC Written Archives Centre, Caversham, E20/62 and Erika Mann Source File 1.

⁴⁷ Indicative of this ideological polarization underpinning international relations during the Cold War was the trajectory of Mann’s own reputation as a public intellectual in the United States and postwar Germany. As “premature antifascist,” Mann had been on the radar of the FBI since the early 1940s. However, after the end of the war, she was more openly denounced. In fact, her FBI file refers to her as a “concealed communist” and “an alien possibly subject to deportation.” Unsurprisingly, planned lectures were cancelled and her application for US citizenship, submitted in 1947, remained unprocessed. The West-German press, meanwhile, began to call her a “culture bolshevist.” See Von der Lühe, *Erika Mann*, 302, 310, 324, 325 and Andrea Weiss, “Communism, Perversion, and Other Crimes against the State: The FBI Files of Klaus and Erika Mann,” in *Modernism on File*, ed. Claire A. Culleton and Karen Leick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 223.