

Decoding a Literary Double-Crossing: Manfred Bieler's Post-defection Revisions of His Satire  
of Party Hardliner Anna Seghers and His Parody of Her *Excursion of the Dead Girls*  
Maila Zitelli – College of Southern Maryland

In her biography of Anna Seghers, Christiane Zehl Romero relates that while there are some confirmed historical facts regarding the circumstances under which Seghers composed her most “highly regarded,” experimental novella, *Excursion of the Dead Girls* (henceforth *Excursion*), readers still had little “precise information” as to what may have been “the original catalyst” for Seghers’ 1946 text (432-433). However, the galley proof for German Democratic Republic dissident author Manfred Bieler’s 1963 unpublished novel *Karnickel (Coney)*, now accessible at the Monacensia archive in Munich, bolsters my efforts over the past four years to illuminate Bieler’s discovery, already in the early sixties, of the literary origins of Seghers’ novella, and its enigmatic parodic undergirding. In two other studies, I have demonstrated that chapter 17 in Bieler’s post-emigration version of *Karnickel* – published in 1969 under the title *Maria Morzeck, oder Das Kaninchen bin ich (Maria Morzeck, or The Rabbit is Me)*<sup>1</sup>—not only parodies Seghers’ novella and ruthlessly satirizes her person, but ingeniously encodes Bieler’s awareness that Seghers had borrowed her basic concept for the novella, along with myriad leitmotifs, from a 1904 short story “*The Red Laugh*,” by Russian author Leonid Andreev.<sup>2</sup> Seghers’ allusions to the Russian text appear to cast it as ideologically unacceptable due to its pessimism and defeatism.<sup>3</sup> As such, *Excursion* effects a coded nod of deference to the Soviet party line which had officially denounced Andreev, and sought to discount his literary significance, after his 1919 critique of Bolshevik terror (Hutchings, *Leonid* 112).<sup>4</sup> A close comparison of the differences between the first version of Bieler’s parody in *Karnickel* and its revised iteration published after his defection, reveals an intensified indictment of Seghers, who remained mum throughout her career about her sophisticated parodic use of Andreev’s famous anti-war text.<sup>5</sup> Bieler’s unique analysis exposes *Excursion* as a text co-opted in part by Seghers’ critique of *The Red Laugh*, and it merits inclusion in the ongoing post-1989 re-assessment of Seghers’ pre-GDR literary output. To date, there has been no other trace of a disenchanting reception of *Excursion* among oppositional GDR intellectuals.<sup>6</sup>

Andreev’s work was still being suppressed in the Soviet Union during the World War II Red Army successes on the Eastern Front as Seghers appears to have taken up her own careful reading of *The Red Laugh* while in exile in Mexico in 1943. Andreev penned the experimental, apocalyptic anti-war tale during the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 (Newcombe 50-51). He delivers his indictment of war-mongering and propaganda through the mouth piece of a first-person narrator, a soldier who recounts the insanity and horror of the war theater to chilling effect. He drifts off at the outset into psychic reveries of his childhood home during peacetime, only to be re-awakened to the terror that surrounds him. Half-way through the novella, this narrator emerges as a literary ruse: the reader has been listening to the feigned voice of an already deceased soldier, projected by his older brother aiming to commemorate as vividly as possible his war-wounded sibling’s traumatic experiences. Throughout, Andreev depicts those on both sides of the war effort, including children among the civilian population, as maniacal threats. The final scene depicts the gruesome, ether-like ‘red laugh’—a kind of atomized bloodbath—washing over and annihilating all living beings.

A Moscow-loyal member of the Communist party since 1928 (Hilzinger 22), Seghers would understandably take issue with Andreev's profoundly pessimistic, hallucinatory narrative chronicling the total destruction of a war-waging humanity, when the fate of Europe lay in the determination of the Allied Forces to thwart Hitler's military aims. Nevertheless, clearly intrigued by Andreev's work, Seghers proffers her own version of his "sad and strange entertainment, at which, amongst the guests, the shadows of the dead assisted" (Andreev *The Red Laugh* 450). Andreev's depiction of soldiers gathered around a samovar, drinking tea and reminiscing about home and their lost loved ones, could serve as an apt subtitle to Seghers' *Excursion*, wherein a quasi-autobiographical narrator also sojourns in a deep meditation between double-worlds. In surreal waking-reveries, she conjures up memories of sipping coffee under the trees along the Rhine during her school excursion thirty years prior, and mingles with her now dead childhood friends whom she eerily reanimates. Intermittently, she disrupts the trajectory of the idyllic recollections to recount in present time, and with sober-minded precision, stark and often gruesome vignettes as to how those former friends and teachers have met a tragic fate in the interim. Many became the easy prey of propaganda turning them against one-another, others the fatalities of warmongering, or the victims of Fascist and anti-Semitic campaigns. Repeatedly, she recounts the betrayal of the solidarity among her friends and teachers, a feature likely motivating Bieler's critique of Seghers' own dishonorable manipulations of post-war GDR youth.<sup>7</sup> Bieler's satiric assault, situated as it is in a novel assailing the postwar criminalization of oppositional views in the GDR, naturally takes issue not with Seghers' solidarity with antifascist forces, but with her decades-long Stalinist *partienost*—her party loyalty--most prominently manifest for Bieler's generation in her propagandizing for the postwar dictatorship,<sup>8</sup> a practice integral to her service as the GDR's leading literary proponent.<sup>9</sup>

In his satirical novel *Maria Morzeck*, Bieler employs the persona of a working-class ingénue-college prep student Maria--to deliver his invective against the GDR leadership and its adherents. Maria, banned from attending university for the duration of her brother's incarceration on a trumped up charge of sedition, is working as a waitress when she takes up with the judge who condemned her brother to the three-year prison sentence. Assuming the role of a lay lawyer in frequent intimate interrogations of the state prosecutor, she gradually discovers the extent to which he has been corrupted by careerism. The novel attempts to hold the regime accountable for its persecutions of the very generation for whose future it professed to be engaged. To that end, Bieler singles out Seghers in chapter 17, composed as a contumelious parody that satirizes Seghers primarily as a wholly inept teacher and attacks her self-styled image as "re-educator of postwar youth," and "teacher of a nation"<sup>10</sup> as loathsome hypocrisy.

Under the circumstances, Bieler's discovery that Seghers had appropriated the work of a suppressed Russian author, to further her own wartime, and postwar, literary and propagandistic aims, would incense Bieler's outrage. He, too, was a victim of the GDR's censorship codes and other repressive measures aimed at outspoken young intellectuals. For example, the SED had excoriated Bieler for his dissident views,<sup>11</sup> and had him under heavy Stasi surveillance.<sup>12</sup> Yet, despite official measures calculated to intimidate young authors, Bieler, in his first book of parodies, courageously indicates that if a text is found to be hostile to the aims of literature—as its appropriation for the purposes of propaganda would be—its parodic treatment will be subject to an aggressive reckoning.<sup>13</sup> In his final version of chapter 17 in *Maria Morzeck*, Bieler follows

through with a vengeance as he refines his allusions to *The Red Laugh* and more astutely exposes what he considered Seghers' mis-use of that pre-text.

I now turn my discussion to the contrasts between the original text of Bieler's parody in *Karnickel*, and his later revisions thereof, in the most prominent scenario in chapter 17 of *Maria Morzeck*. There, Bieler produces a virtual spectacle of Seghers, and provides readers with inventive clues to her investment in the ideological injunction against Andreev's work. In the passage I explicate below, Bieler's caricature of Seghers--the high school teacher Fräulein Hartung, a chaperone on the school excursion on the Spree river--attempts to assert herself as a role model for the younger generation of GDR students. Between 1963 and 1969, the passage undergoes a transformation from a mildly droll treatment of Seghers, to one of outright raucous satire. In the early version, Bieler somewhat mocks the disingenuousness of the cold war Russian brotherly kiss he has Fräulein Hartung bestow on a hapless bystander. In broad strokes, Hartung's forced peck, and the helpless obsequiousness of its recipient, alludes to Seghers' obeisance to the party.<sup>14</sup> The satire will take on new life six years later, when Bieler deletes the kiss, and re-structures the passage. The resulting satire comes alive with the insolence of a parodist bent on heightening reader appreciation of the rhythm, movement, and jarring sound effects in the Russian pre-text. But first, let us look at and listen to, the original 'kiss' and Bieler's allusions via inversion to its source in *The Red Laugh*.

Fräulein Hartung—whom Bieler tags as Seghers' caricature through multiple textual clues linking her to the quasi-autobiographical narrator in *Excursion*<sup>15</sup>--is about to show the younger generation of schools girls how to go about getting some attention from the men on the ship. For ease of subsequent comparison with the originary Russian text, I first cite the following episode from *Karnickel*, with some ellipses, by italicizing the lexical items Bieler manipulates, inverts, or recasts, to encode his allusions to the corresponding passage from *The Red Laugh*:

*She [Fräulein Hartung] rose, smoothed her dress, and headed to the dance floor. The three musicians were taking a break at the bar. She pointed to the stocky Drummer and called out:*

*“You, there, young man, come here a minute!”*

*...The drummer approached her hesitantly, turning round once back towards his colleagues.*

*He remained next to her. She was somewhat taller than he.*

*“What is it you want?” he asked.*

*Fräulein Hartung gave us one last look, and said triumphantly: “Now I'll show you all how to handle sailors.”*

*She threw her arms around his neck, and planted a resounding kiss smack on the lips of the utterly dumfounded pudg. She then let him go, and the drummer retreated backwards, speechless, to the bar....*

*When she gave him that kiss, we fell into complete silence. But when she herself began laughing, we set off roaring so hard we could barely stand up straight. (19)*

As these college prep students guffaw at the pretenses of their teacher, Bieler finishes off the satire with a parodic allusion to *Excursion*—wherein Seghers' narrator struggles, as well, to maintain balance on her feet throughout her visionary journey back in time to her own school outing on the Rhein river.<sup>16</sup> To appreciate Bieler's lapidary approach to the twin arts of satire

and parody, we must open Andreev's *The Red Laugh*, which contains the original passage onto which Bieler maps the mocked kiss.

Despondent about the horrors and futility of the war efforts, Andreev's narrator reports the following episode between himself and a deranged soldier, the Russian model whose actions Bieler uses to animate his Fräulein Hartung (my emphases and ellipses):

And I saw a *soldier part from the crowd and direct his steps in a decided manner towards us. For an instant I lost sight of him...he reappeared...He was coming so straight upon me that I grew frightened and, breaking through the heavy torpor that enveloped my brain, I asked: "What do you want?"*  
*He stopped short...and stood before me, enormous...He flung his arms and legs about and he was visibly trying to control them, but he could not.*  
...Involuntarily, I got up...*tottering*, looked into his eyes--and saw an abyss of horror and insanity in them...in those black, bottomless pupils, surrounded by a narrow orange colored rim, like a bird's eye, there was more than death, more than the horror of death. "*Go away!*" I cried, *falling back...*and as if he was only waiting for a word, *enormous, disorderly and mute as before, he suddenly fell down upon me, knocking me over.*  
...I jumped up... somewhere above our heads a shell flew past with a gladsome, *many-voiced screech and howl....*I ran up to the files of men...I saw serene, *almost joyous faces*, heard hoarse, but loud voices, orders, *jokes....*and again, a shell, like a witch, cut the air with a *gladsome screech.* (441-442)

In this very first chapter of *The Red Laugh*, we find the quarry Bieler mined for the key elements he employed to satirize Seghers' person, even as he parodies *Excursion*.<sup>17</sup> Appropriately adhering to the laws of the genre, Bieler subjects these elements to full comic inversion. A close analysis of the elements in common allows us to first gain an overview of the parallels in the parodic play. It becomes evident that Bieler cast Seghers' caricature into the loathsome role of the demented Russian soldier, with the requisite parodic inversion needed to allude to her as a cold warrior constituting a danger to the oft propagandized GDR youth. Employing a physical gag, Bieler transforms the frightful scene in *The Red Laugh* into a droll one. Paralleling the Andreevan passage, Bieler's caricature of Seghers also rises, separates from the school girls, and approaches her victim. Both Fräulein Hartung and Andreev's crazed soldier are larger than the person they approach and literally accost. In both scenarios, the hapless target is stunned into silence, and moves backwards. In *The Red Laugh*, the scene ends with an uproar, capped off with a bombshell described as emitting a hag's screech. In Bieler's scenario, first Fräulein Hartung's laugh, and then the wild outbreak of students guffawing at the indecorous kiss, supply the parodic inversion of the racket emitted by the explosives and the soldiers' shouts. Andreev's sardonic 'red laugh' of bloody death in warfare rings out in chapter 17 of *Maria Morzeck* as the gleeful, subversive laughter—meant to shore up courage--of the youth impacted by the not so bloody, but nevertheless harrowing, Cold War. Thus, in one broad sweep Bieler's scene condenses a satire of Seghers with parodic reference to her *Excursion* and allusions to that novella's debt to Andreev's *The Red Laugh*.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, this first version of the scenario ends with an almost conciliatory softening of the transgression against the *Grand Dame* of the East German literary scene: Bieler allows Maria Morzeck to wonder if she, too, in her old age, might behave no differently than Fräulein Hartung. But it is no surprise that with the increase in state surveillance Bieler faced, leading him to take up residence first in Prague, and then, having fled from the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, in Munich, he deletes Maria's comment when completing the final revisions. As I will show below, in its place Bieler seizes upon the motif of the bombshell likened to the screech of a witch, in order to blend, recover, and rework another detail from *The Red Laugh*: the simile attributing avian features--orange-rimmed pupils, like in "a bird's eyes" (441)--to the approaching soldier. Bieler subjects them all to the parodic permutations that make the scene into a real spectacle.

Retaining from *The Red Laugh* key elements of the aforementioned scenario, Bieler's final iteration in *Maria Morzeck* still has Fräulein Hartung approach the drummer. But this time around, Bieler extends the movement created by Seghers' caricature, Fräulein Hartung, when she originally threw her arms around the drummer's neck, and forced a kiss. Now Maria, her gaze fixed on Fräulein Hartung's approach to the drummer, reports, "...and I suddenly got a *real fright*, because I thought she was *about to topple him*" (my italics, 61). In his revised choice of words, Bieler hews here even more closely to the Russian text, whose narrator reports that he "grew frightened" (441) when taking in the approach of the menacing soldier--and rightly so, as the soldier shortly thereafter topples the narrator to the ground. Once we see how the revised scene unfolds, we can share Bieler's assessment that the kiss-gag from the first version was consummated too quickly. In the revised passage, instead of simply bestowing a quick peck, the overly eager Fräulein Hartung insists the drummer be her partner on a tour of the dance floor, despite the fact that the rest of the band is taking a break. Bieler sets his Seghers' caricature in motion as Maria records the scene:

As there was no music, she herself sang: "Rá-rará-rará!" It took a while before the accordion and the violin joined in. Then we gathered around the parquet dance floor, singing "rúm-tata, rúm-tata," and over all of this Fräulein Hartung was crowing the *Danube Waltz*: "Rá-rará-rá-rará!" The drummer then brought her back to her chair....She drank a beer, and nodded her head to the beat of every song....She probably had the feeling, that she had shown us how one could act all out of control<sup>19</sup> without getting into any trouble. But all that she had accomplished was, that from that evening on, she would be referred to by the nickname we bequeathed to our underclassmen: the Crow (Rará!) (61-62).

Bieler's artful word play reaches its acme in the above passage. To attune oneself to his brilliant transposition for crow-voice of the *Danube Waltz* one must know that it was that very score that had been kept most current in the Kremlin until 1953. As Huxley noted in an essay in 1959, Stalin's favorite artwork, often projected during private screenings, was a musical, the Hollywood production *The Great Waltz* (1939), featuring the life of Johann Strauss (229). Through Fräulein Hartung's klutzy crowing, the satire adroitly mocks Seghers' *parteinost*. But the cawing that inspires the nickname "the crow," 'die Krähe' (62) also cleverly cues the reader to Seghers' appropriation of the suppressed Andreev text. It targets both Seghers' prideful

mention in *Excursion* of her interwar popular front aliases, and her literary device of invoking her beloved birth name, Netty, as indices for the empowerment of her narrator. In fragment 18 of *The Red Laugh*, a soldier from the front relates in a letter home the insidious battlefield marauding of the carrion crows, and notes that they sometimes eat their prey alive. The letter contains no fewer than eight repetitions, scattered throughout, of the phrase “the crows are screeching” (510) ‘Vron kricit, vron kricit’ (Andreev *Krasyni* 257). A Russian word with the same alliterative consonant cluster is used for the screech “krikom” (219) of the bombshell in the passage from *The Red Laugh* that Bieler chose for the development of his satire of Seghers, the scenario wherein another shell also screeches “like a witch” (442). Bieler must work in translation, of course, and the guttural cawing in German--rarará--becomes the audio track for his satire. Fräulein Hartung’s crowing in chapter 17 should also jar our audio memories of *Excursion*, for there we also hear the similarly alliterative, onomatopoeic cawing, “das Krächzen” in the phrase “das Krächzen von ein paar Vögeln” (Seghers *Der Ausflug* 30) “the cawing of a couple of birds” (Seghers *Excursion* 48) as evening falls.<sup>20</sup> In reducing Seghers’ verbal output to concatenated caws, Bieler consigns Seghers’ voice to a lower order in the animal kingdom, a common device satirists employ to demean the object of their contempt. In concluding the waltz passage by assigning Seghers the ‘wickedly’ endowed nickname “die Krähe,” Bieler succeeds in deftly evoking through alliteration the Russian “kricit” – and with it, the crow’s, the bombshell’s, the hag’s screech. Thus, with stunning literary economy, Bieler’s parody of Andreev’s text allows the abused Russian author some posthumous revenge: to join in the satirist’s insult of Seghers, who, like the notoriously sharp-witted imitator the crow,<sup>21</sup> profits famously from Andreev’s literary output, while condoning the Stalinist precepts justifying his censure.<sup>22</sup>

Despite Bieler’s cues to his readership, *Excursion* and *Maria Morzeck* comprise a remarkable case of a succession of literary parodies unrecognized in the secondary literature.<sup>23</sup> Granted, the reader must have all three texts open simultaneously, and be receptive to the subtleties of the art of inversion so central to parodic texts, in order to decipher their literary merits. Yet, in her discussion of another long undetected appropriation of an Andreevan short story, Ellen McCracken points out that a reader’s success in detecting intertextuality “depends precisely on the close textual reading no longer in critical fashion” (1081). Bieler, too, reflects on the meticulous ferreting out of literary allusion he knows will be necessary for the appreciation of his work: “I expect my readers to pay attention to every word and nuance, and to follow through on each implication without my having to spell things out” (Bieler, *Tagebücher*, my translation.) Access to Bieler’s 1963 *Karnickel* provides Bieler aficionados that opportunity. They stand to gain a rare peek into the intricacies of his creative process and the range of his literary genius. *Karnickel* provides at least twice as much material to support the view that Bieler cracked the case as to the origins of Seghers’ otherwise seemingly unique and unparalleled novella--one she reported to her editor as representing “something completely new, never seen before” (my translation, Emmerich and Pick 55).<sup>24</sup>

---

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth *Maria Morzeck*. All translations of *Karnickel* and *Maria Morzeck* are my own.

---

<sup>2</sup> See my papers, “Savaging Seghers: Manfred Bieler’s Parody of *Excursion of the Dead Girls* in *Maria Morzeck, oder das Kaninchen bin ich*,” presented in 2006 at the RMMLA and LCMND, and “Parody in Anna Seghers’ *Excursion of the Dead Girls*: Producing ‘a sad and strange entertainment’ à la Leonid Andreev,” presented in 2008 at the RMMLA and LCMND.

<sup>3</sup> See my article, “Parody in Anna Seghers’ *Excursion of the Dead Girls*: Producing ‘a sad and strange entertainment’ à la Leonid Andreev,” for a full discussion of Seghers appropriation of the bloody scene in an early chapter of *The Red Laugh* that prominently explicates the title of that short story, and how she expertly transposes its imagery to produce a life-affirming vignette in *Excursion*.

<sup>4</sup> From his self-exile in Finland shortly before his pre-mature death in 1919, Andreev had sent out an S.O.S. to Western allied forces, entreating them to aid in the fight against the brutality of the Bolshevik revolution. (Hutchings *Leonid* 112). During the forties and fifties, Andreev’s son Daniil, also “fell victim” to Stalinism (Hutchings *Leonid* 112).

<sup>5</sup> Although there are no other studies uncovering parody in Seghers’ frequently interpreted *Excursion*, Cohen, Dinter, Fehervary, Grossmann, Gutzmann, Labahn, Maier-Katkin, Mayer, Pohle, and Schlossbauer offer, nevertheless, particularly insightful readings.

<sup>6</sup> Wallace suggests that “the collapse of the socialist world means...that Seghers can now be rescued from her post-war critics, admirers and detractors alike, for their work is...disfigured by the imprint of the Cold War” (136). He anticipates that “a clearer picture of Seghers’ specifically literary status” (136) would emerge, and foresees that most likely her work composed prior to 1947, including *Excursion*, would remain celebrated. Yet another decade has passed, and it would appear that *Excursion* now requires reconsideration as itself inextricable from ideological Cold War polemics, beginning already, as some historians assert, in 1917.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Seghers’ essay “An einer Baustelle in Berlin” ‘At a construction site in Berlin’ (all translations from this essay are mine) in *Über Kunstwerk und Wirklichkeit*. There, she praises a young student who had been fulfilling a year internship as a construction worker when the June 1953 strike erupted in protest against deteriorating labor conditions. The young student had laudably “protected” the workers in his unit from the outright “shame” that would have befallen them had he not successfully dissuaded them from participating in the strike. Propagandizing in this vein, Seghers commends the unit for standing behind the Soviet soldiers (“the unerring heroes of peace”) who suppressed the uprising (263-264).

<sup>8</sup> See Roos and Hassauer-Roos for a collection of essays related to the controversies surrounding Seghers’ role as head of the East German Writers Association that arose in the late 1950s in the West German press. Seghers had returned to Berlin in 1947, and served the Writers Association from 1952-1978 (Hilzinger 198). While in 1962 Luchterhand Verlag was preparing the first West German edition of Seghers’ 1942 bestseller *The Seventh Cross*, Seghers’ postwar works were seen by some as too thoroughly compromised by her party-loyalty to the prevailing East German regime, notoriously censorious of oppositional voices, to be of any literary value.

<sup>9</sup> For many of Bieler’s generation, despite the Popular Front heroism of the GDR leadership during the 1930s and 1940s, their perpetuation of a totalitarian regime in post-war East Germany discredited them and their propagandists. As Fritz Raddatz reports, Bieler was associated with a group of young *personae non grata* writers who pressed vocally for de-Stalinization in the GDR, and who were deeply disaffected by the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 (393).

---

<sup>10</sup> Gutzmann discusses the role Seghers hoped literature would play in the postwar “Umerziehung der deutschen Jugend” --“the reeducation of German youth”—(476). Seghers’ acolyte Christa Wolf, who considers the novella “eine der schönsten Erzählungen der deutschen Literatur”--“one of the most beautiful stories in German literature” (my translation, 308)-- comments that Seghers was determined to return to Germany with an explicit didactic purpose, “Lehrer zu sein für ein ganzes Volk” ‘to be a teacher for a whole nation’ (my translation, 309). Bieler’s satire reveals that at least for some in his generation, Seghers misgauged the receptivity of her young audience hyper-alert to propaganda in the name of any cause.

<sup>11</sup> In the words of Kurt Hager, the film adaptation of *Maria Morzeck* was banned in December 1965, just prior to its premiere, on the grounds that it promoted “doubt and skepticism” among GDR youth (qtd. in Günter Agde 140).

<sup>12</sup> Bieler’s widow, Marcella Bieler, kindly allowed me access to Bieler’s voluminous Stasi-file in summer 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Bieler’s exact words in an introductory note (without page number) titled, “The Literary Parody,” may be of interest: “Wird die Kunst für kunstfeindliche Absichten mißbraucht, so ist die Parodie aggressiv und beweist ihre kunstfreundlichen Absichten” ‘If art is misused for purposes inimical to art, its parody is aggressive and demonstrates its own pro-art intentions’ (my translations, Bieler, *Der Schuss*).

<sup>14</sup> Bieler avails himself of the clichéd stereotype of the Russian ‘brotherly kiss.’ For an example of the WWII propaganda poster depicting a Polish peasant kissing a Red Army soldier as ‘liberator’ in 1939, or, for a more recent iteration—subsequently destroyed--on the Berlin Wall of the oft ridiculed kiss Breshnev planted on Honecker during the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the GDR, see these links: <http://englishrussia.com/?p=1702> and <http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=103&article=64538>.

<sup>15</sup> Both Hartung and Seghers reminisce about their own school outings thirty years prior, and weigh in about matters of youthful romance. Further, both are endowed in the texts with multiple names: Seghers’ implied *nom de plume* (she was born Netty Reiling), her unspecified popular front aliases, and her birth name Netty, used by her childhood friends and teachers; Hartung’s own proper name (an old Germanic name for the month of January, thus associating her with the dead of winter and the cold), as well as her pejorative avian nickname assigned in the course of the satire.

<sup>16</sup> For example, as she approaches in her day-vision her parent’s apartment back in Mainz, Seghers’ narrator reports in one passage, “It seemed unbearably hard for me to climb up the stairs,” (51) and in another, “But my legs failed me” (51).

<sup>17</sup> Seghers, too, works heavily off of the first and second chapters of *The Red Laugh* when composing *Excursion*.

<sup>18</sup> Hutcheon (43-44) discusses the frequent pairing of satire (as extramural in orientation) and parody (as intramural in orientation) in 20th-century literature. Bieler’s parody of *Excursion* exemplifies her observation. He employs the parody (an intramural genre choice) of *Excursion* in order simultaneously to satirize (an extramural literary project) Seghers’ person, and her support of the SEDs claim to legitimate hegemony. In doing so, he questions both her self-styled literary *intramural* and public *extramural* image as one who consistently occupies the moral high ground. Hutcheon also discusses parodies that pay tribute to, rather than disparage, an originary

---

text. However, Bieler's parody of *Excursion* clearly does not count itself among those, while his solidarity with Andreev in the double parody affirms that author's right to consideration of the merits of his suppressed *Red Laugh*.

<sup>19</sup> Bieler's clever use in German of the idiomatic expression "ausser Rand und Band" (62) to render the notion of becoming disorderly, or out of control, gets lost in translation: the phrase was also the German translation of the 1954 rock and roll hit, "Rock Around the Clock," "an anthem for Fifties rebellious youth" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock\\_Around\\_the\\_Clock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_Around_the_Clock)). Note, too, that in the passage Bieler parodies from *The Red Laugh*, the Russian text refers to the menacing soldier as "disorderly" (441). Bieler aims to delight his readers by deftly using music to signal his parodic and satiric intent: earlier in chapter 17, Maria complains that despite the youths' best efforts to get the band members to play something more to their liking—such as jazz—they inevitably slip back into traditional tunes such as "Möwe, du fliegst in die Heimat" 'Seagull, you are flying home.' The lyrics of this 1946 hit articulate homesickness, and the hopes of returning one day to Germany, the very themes of longing Seghers' develops in the opening passages of *Excursion*.

<sup>20</sup> Further intertextual corroboration for Seghers' preoccupation with Andreev's text, and Bieler's discovery of it, can be found in another story Seghers completed around the same time as *Excursion*, *Post ins gelobte Land* (1945) 'Mail to the Promised Land.' There we find Seghers borrowing, and adapting, an unmistakably unique feature of the letter with the crow caws from fragment 18 in *The Red Laugh*: namely, that it was sent by a soldier already dead by the time it reaches its intended recipient, who has also passed away before it arrives. Without knowledge of its literary origins, Pohle's succinct paraphrase of this salient motif in *Post ins gelobte Land* as a "Brief eines Toten an einen Toten," a 'letter from the dead to the dead' (my translation, 48), demonstrates that a deep reader of Seghers' and Andreev's works, such as Bieler was, would have readily noted the borrowing and seized upon it in drafting his indictment of her misuse of Andreev's text. As evidence of the breadth of Bieler's knowledge of Seghers' texts from this time period, I note that he composed not only this parody of *Excursion*, but also one of Seghers' *Transit*, a further work she completed while in Mexico in 1942.

<sup>21</sup> See ornithologist Reichholf's study on this highly intelligent species notably adept at dissemblance.

<sup>22</sup> Hilzinger mentions that while in exile, Seghers was receiving royalties from the publications of her own books in the Soviet Union (52).

<sup>23</sup> See for example Nagel, Raddatz, Sander, Vormweg and Werth, who miss the satiric and parodic content altogether.

<sup>24</sup> In her November 1943 correspondence with Aurora Press editor Wieland Herzfelde, Seghers characterizes the novella she is working on as "etwas ganz Neues, Unvorhergesehenes" -- "something completely new, never seen before" (55). Andreev's narrator repeatedly uses references to the 'new,' 'novel,' and 'strange' when writing about the sights and sounds of the sardonic *red laugh* permeating the battlefield. For example, his narrator says that the cries and groans of the wounded resemble "none of those heard before" (460), and that the soldiers feel "a new, unexperienced terror" (467). Russian dystopia author Zamyatin, inspired by Andreev, echoes the references to the 'new' and 'novel' in his 1924 *We*, where the future, referred to by the distraught characters contemplating a revolt against their oppressors, is envisioned as something "new, never before seen..." (141). Is Zamyatin's line an unattributed direct quote in

---

Seghers' letter to her editor? Interested at the time in Andreev, and in re-working Russian dissident texts to suit her purposes, Seghers could easily have had Zamyatin's *We* on hand as well.