
² 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.

³ 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*.

⁴ 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).

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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).

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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).

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

¹³ 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*).

¹⁴ 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 30th 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>.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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).

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

¹⁸ 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*.

¹⁹ 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). 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*.

²⁰ 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.

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

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

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

²⁴ 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.