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Anna Seghers and the Problem of a National Narrative after Auschwitz

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Ich glaub, die Toten sind gestorben
....
Die Toten sind gar nicht jung geblieben
Es stirbt, wofür sie einst gestorben
Das, was sie trieb - und was sie trieben:
Ihr Kinderglaube ist verdorben
Kein Paradies wirds nie nicht geben
Die Hölle graut mir kunterbunt
Hier, wo die Toten nicht mehr leben
Gehn auch die Lebenden zugrund.

(Wolf Biermann, "Cor ne edito," 1990)[1]

This article deals with a set of novels and stories which Anna Seghers wrote between 1943 and 1948. These texts are: first, her monumental historical novel *Die Toten bleiben jung*, written between 1944 and 1948, and published by Aufbau; and, second, two stories, "Ausflug der toten Mädchen" and "Post ins gelobte Land," written around 1943-45 and first published as part of a collection of stories in 1946 in New York.[2] My intention is to problematize the first text, *Die Toten*, Seghers' narrative of the history of the German nation between 1918 and 1945, by reading it in the context of the stories which she wrote and published while working on the larger novel. This context is a very specific one: both the strongly autobiographical "Ausflug der toten Mädchen" and the more chronicle-like "Post ins gelobte Land" deal with something the historical novel only addresses peripherally, namely the destruction of European Jewry. It is this juxtaposition of stories, the non-integration of the Jewish theme into the grand national epic, that interests me here. In the course of this contextual or intertextual reading, I will argue that in Seghers' work the conflicts and contradictions in the project of a German national narrative after the Holocaust crystallize around the concept of motherhood, or the maternal, and its relationship to writing and memory.

At the international writers' conference in Paris in 1935, Seghers delivered a speech entitled "Vaterlandsliebe."[3] Like Ernst Bloch's work on National Socialism, Seghers' talk is premised on the idea that concepts central to Nazi ideology such as the "fatherland" are not mere fictional constructs but that they refer to the reality of an authentic experience.[4] This experience of the "fatherland" or nation, Seghers' argues, has to be re-appropriated by those opposed to National Socialism, and she concludes her intervention with the programmatic sentence: "Helfen wir Schriftsteller am Aufbau neuer Vaterländer."[5]

Obviously, this project informed Seghers' most successful novel *Das siebte Kreuz*, often referred to as a "linker Heimatroman." However, I want to focus on *Die Toten bleiben jung* as the more properly historical novel, the work which not only re-articulates the concept of "fatherland" with a socialist discourse, but which actually engages in the rewriting of the German history along the lines of a Marxist historiography. Seghers is not the only exile author involved in this project: between 1934 and 1964, Willi Bredel and Hans Marchwitza publish a set of trilogies which also narrate the history of the German nation prior to the founding of the GDR. These novels are Hans Marchwitza's trilogy *Die Kumiaks*, *Die Heimkehr der Kumiaks*, and *Die Kumiaks und ihre Kinder*,[6] and Willi Bredel's trilogy *Verwandte und Bekannte*, or *Die Väter, Die Söhne*, and *Die Enkel*.[7] And like Seghers, both Bredel and Marchwitza write their "foundationalist narratives" along the lines of a specific narrative structure, namely that of the family narrative.

Before analyzing *Die Toten* in more detail, I would like to make a few points about these male-authored novels. First, I use the term "foundationalist narratives" in order to underscore the strong legitimatory dimension of these texts. As stories of German communist families, the novels insist that the GDR's legitimacy does not merely rest on the Red Army, but can be traced to a strong indigenous tradition of socialism. The texts also link the newly founded socialist state to the supposedly antifascist history of the communists and thus help produce a particular ideological construct, the construct of the "Sieger der Geschichte."

Second, on the level of narrative structure and its gendered dimension, this antifascist "Sieger-geschichte" takes a very specific form: both *Verwandte und Bekannte* and *Die Kumiaks* focus predominantly on their male characters, pushing the novels' women characters to the periphery--structurally speaking. What emerges is history as male lineage, as a continuous, unbroken line of communist fathers and communist sons. Women do not function as historical agents within this structure. They only acquire significance on the metaphorical level, where femininity represents, in a very traditional way, nature, life, the future, and ultimately, the utopian promise of socialism.[8]

Did Seghers write the same story? Not quite, I would argue, and for the following reasons: first, although the structure of *Die Toten* also works with

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the ideological element of the patrilinear "Siegergeschichte," in Seghers' novel this story is turned into a sustained metaphor--a transformation which points to its more tenuous status in the narrative.[9] In other words: I read this metaphorization as an indication that Seghers knows about the fragility of this ideological construct. My second point is related to the fragile status of this victorious struggle of the "Reihe der Kämpfer," to use a phrase from Bredel. In *Die Toten bleiben jung*, the concept of femininity, or motherhood, moves to the center of the text, functioning as a kind of support for its master metaphor, a kind of "ideological cement," to use the Gramscian term.

Die Toten bleiben jung opens with a scene in which Erwin, a young revolutionary and Spartacist is executed by three members of the Freikorps. The first scene, which takes place in 1918, pre-structures the entire book through a number of rather rigid techniques: first, out of this founding scene and its cast of characters develop the novel's five major narrative strands: the story of Marie, a Berlin seamstress and Erwin's lover, who at the moment of the young Spartacist's death is pregnant with their son, Hans; then, the story of Klemm, a German army officer and the owner of a chemical factory in Mainz; the third narrative strand revolves around Klemm's brother-in-law, von Wenzlow, the son of a Prussian military family; the fourth strand centers on Lieven, an officer and expropriated landowner from the East; and, finally, there is the story of Nadler, a soldier and poor farmer from the Berlin region. In the course of the novel, other characters will be added to these five strands. *Die Toten bleiben jung* is thus a novel in the realist tradition, attempting to portray the totality of German society by focusing on what its Marxist framework suggests are the representative social forces.[10]

On the horizontal level, the novel's narrative structure can thus be described as a montage of five separate stories. It can also be described on the vertical level as the articulation of five "ground narratives" with an overarching narrative, one which gradually turns into the text's master metaphor--the dead stay young. I want to briefly trace the development of that metaphor. Its origin is the moment of Erwin's death. At the end of chapter one, Erwin's friend Martin receives the news of his death. Martin's reflections culminate in an almost monumental image of his younger friend, thus initiating the process of metaphorization:

> Er war für die Seinen gestorben, für die er gekämpft hatte, seit er nachdenken konnte. Mehr konnte niemand tun ... Erwin war unangreifbar und unantastbar (DT/15).[11]

The second component in the construction of this metaphorical level is a scene set in Saxony in 1923. Wenzlow and his Freikorps are sent to fight the proletarian "Hundertschaften," and at the end of the battle, Wenzlow orders the execution of a young communist. The chapter ends with a dream sequence, in which the face of this young man and the memory of Erwin merge (DT/96). Finally, Wenzlow recognizes Erwin's face one last time, as he shouts the order to kill six young men who are caught preparing to defect to the Russian army. Among them is Hans, Erwin's son, who is now (the year is 1944) a soldier of the Wehrmacht fighting in the Soviet Union. Wenzlow is unaware of this "coincidence," but as he prepares to kill himself--realizing the war is lost--he connects the two events. It is this final monologue which definitively merges the images of Erwin and Hans into an icon of the young proletarian hero:

> Sie hatten ihn umgelegt und verscharrt. Wie aber war er jung geblieben. Wahrscheinlich waren schon längst alle tot, die damals mitgemacht hatten ... Doch dieser Bursche, vorhin, der zweite von rechts, der hatte den Kopf zurückgeworfen wie ein junges Pferd. Der Tod schien ihm nichts anzuhaben. Sie waren ihm über die Brust gegangen, die Noske und Lichtschlag, die Kapp und die Lüttwitz. Wie aber war er jung geblieben! Die Nazis hatten gerade ihm den Himmel auf Erden versprochen, er hatte sich aber nichts vormachen lassen. In allen Mühlen hatten sie ihn zermahlen, seine Knochen hatten geknirscht; sie hatten ihn in den Krieg geführt, von Schlacht zu Schlacht; er hatte sich aber nicht totschießen lassen; er war jung geblieben (DT/447).

This massive construction which spans across the whole novel connects the stories of Erwin and Marie one more time on the very last page. Marie now lives together with Emmi, Hans' girlfriend. Like Marie at the beginning of the novel, Emmi is pregnant, and like Erwin, Hans is unaware of her pregnancy. The novel ends: "Sie [the two women] lagen ruhig atmend, Gesicht gegen Gesicht, die letzten Stunden der Nacht; und zwischen ihnen das Kind, das das Licht der Welt noch nicht erblickt hatte" (DT/448).

A detailed analysis of identificatory writing techniques would clearly show that the narrative strand revolving around the figure of Marie is privileged with respect to the four other stories. The initial scene, for instance, is written almost entirely

from Erwin's perspective, reducing the distance between reader and character and thus preparing the reader for an intense identification with that story which is most closely linked to Erwin. However, instead of pursuing the analysis of narrative perspective any further, I would like to point out the multiple layers of connotations which crystallize around the figure of Marie. In Erwin's inner monologue, Seghers sets up an opposition between his old life, i.e. his life in the army, and his new life as a revolutionary, whereby the elements "Mutter," "Heimat," and "Zuflucht" shift from the first to the second signifier. Again, by explicitly articulating the concept of "revolution" and a "new life" with "home" and "mother," Seghers takes up Bloch's project of a counter-hegemonic strategy which goes beyond purely economistic logic of argumentation. This particular chain of signifiers--revolution/Marie/home--is carefully set in place as the narrative proceeds. First, the association is made in the literal sense: Marie provides her new husband and her children with a perfect home; on an even more literal level Marie as mother becomes home. When Hans returns momentarily from the Eastern front, Seghers writes:

> Er legte den Kopf in den Schoß seiner Mutter. Er sagte: "Ach Mutter! Ich habe mir oft gewünscht, ich könnte in dir zurückkriechen" (DT/413).

At the end of the novel, Marie is the only character in the group of women working in an ammunitions factory who is endowed with a utopian force, an image of what new life might look like once the misery and the bombing are over (DT/430). As a mother who wants to prevent her son from dying at the front, Marie gets involved in a sabotage, and she is repeatedly contrasted with another mother, a convinced National Socialist, who calls upon everyone to fight against the Soviets until the bitter end, and who is looked upon even by her own children with dread and horror as not a mother, but a "Gespenst" (DT/427). From this contrast, Marie emerges as the "real" mother, the one Seghers claims is buried beneath the Nazis' ideology of motherhood. In 1942 Seghers wrote:

> Es gibt eine Anzahl Worte, die viele Menschen nicht mehr ohne Ekel anhören können ... Darunter gehören Worte wie Vaterland, Heimaterde, Volk. Diese Worte haben in Wahrheit noch einen anderen Sinn als den, den Hitler ihnen in schäumenden Reden beilegt ... Was Hitler auch alles mit dem Wort "Mutter" gemacht hat, an wievielen Muttertagen, durch wieviel Mutterkreuze die deutsche Frau gepriesen wurde, dem niederträchtigsten Krieg Söhne geboren zu haben, der echte Begriff "Mutter" hat deshalb nie ausgelöscht werden können, weil er zu den Begriffen gehört, die jeder Mensch jede Minute durch eigene Erfahrung erneuert.[12]

Yet the figure of Marie is not the only result of an attempt to re-appropriate certain concepts from National Socialism. As Ursula Heukenkamp has observed, the notion of motherhood and its traditional connotations was absolutely central to the project of cultural renovation in the immediate post-war years.[13] Speaking about the Soviet occupied zone, Heukenkamp notes that the supposed "Gleichgültigkeit" and egotism of women was seen as the most glaring symptom of the general moral decay. And she argues that this perceived crisis of "Mütterlichkeit" can be read in the texts of this period as a constant invocation of exactly this quality in women.[14] Seghers' text, her iconography of motherhood, clearly participates in this effort to restore lost values, to instill once more a feeling for what she calls "dignité humaine" through the mobilization of the maternal.[15]

Marie thus becomes the pure incarnation of the idea of motherhood, and like any feminine allegory, this requires a process of purification, the separation of the mind or the idea, from the body.[16] In *Die Toten bleiben jung*, Marie is completely de-sexualized, sexuality is sublated into maternal love. But, I would argue, she is not only "purified" of her body. Marie's allegorical purity also comes from the fact that she is untouched by any knowledge of the Holocaust. This is underscored by the contrast between her and Elisabeth Lieven. This other mother figure of *Die Toten bleiben jung* has been witness to the deportation and the killing of the Jews: on her way to her estate in the East, Elisabeth Lieven watches as a group of Jews is forced into a cattle wagon; and when Ernst Lieven, now an SS officer, returns home, Elisabeth overhears a conversation about the killing of two thousand Jewish women. The text dwells on the image of the naked women on their way to the gas chambers, on the officers' cynical comments (DT/397). Elisabeth Lieven dies in a snow storm, holding her son and praying to a non-existing god for forgiveness (DT/402-403). The contrast between this mother figure and Marie is consistently built up in the course of the narrative, resulting in the emergence of Marie as the pure allegory described above. This allegorical effect is further enhanced by the religious aura built around

the character, reaching from her name to the aureole of light emanating from her hair.

Marie's allegorical purity, her status as ideal mother merging with the utopian dimension of socialism, thus functions as a necessary "cementing" element in the national project, centering a socialist narrative which otherwise would remain only a tenuous construct. At the same time, the other dimension of the allegory, her being removed from the Holocaust, points towards a specific tension in Seghers' writing. At this point I would like to quote from an essay entitled "Volk und Schriftsteller." In this 1942 essay, Seghers writes:

> Nicht durch mystische Blutbande ist der Schriftsteller mit dem Volk verknüpft, sondern durch soziale. Nicht an der Stelle, wo er durch irgendeine schleierhafte Rassenzugehörigkeit seiner zufälligen Geburt dem Volke anhängt, sondern an jenem gesellschaftlichen Ort, an dem er sich zugehörig fühlt, durch jene Klasse ... mit der er sich innerhalb seines Volkes identifiziert. Der antifaschistische Schriftsteller identifiziert sich mit jener Schicht seines Volkes, die die progressive Geschichte, die Freiheit seines Volkes, sichert.[17]

The figure of Marie indicates that this identification with the most "progressive class" is not without its problems and tensions. This allegory, so central to both the ideological project and the narrative structure of this text, hints at the fact that Anna Seghers, like so many Jewish communists returning to Germany after 1945, had to repress certain experiences, certain memories, in order to be able to live in East Germany.[18] Indeed, reading through the East German scholarship on Seghers, it becomes obvious that part of her public persona as motherly educator of the German people rested on this willingness to repress, on her willingness not to express any "anti-German ressentiments," as Christa Wolf puts it.[19]

"Ausflug der toten Mädchen" and "Post ins gelobte Land" show a very different pattern of identification. "Ausflug der toten Mädchen" was written after Seghers received the news of her mother's death in a Polish concentration camp. The image of Jewish women on their way to death, intensely disturbing but marginal to the central story of *Die Toten*, might remind many readers of this part of Seghers' biography. Seghers' autobiographical story, which so masterfully blends the present of the author in her Mexican exile with the memories from her German past works toward one specific moment, the moment when Netty, the girl, returns home from the excursion longing to be taken into her mother's arms. The scene is described in the following way:

> [Meine Mutter] wartete schon auf mich. Wie jung sie doch aussah, die Mutter, viel jünger als ich. Wie dunkel ihr glattes Haar war, mit meinem verglichen. Meins wurde ja schon bald grau, während durch ihres noch keine sichtbaren grauen Schläfen liefen. Sie stand vergnügt und aufrecht da, bestimmt zu arbeitsreichem Familienleben, mit den gewöhnlichen Freuden und Lasten des Alltags, nicht zu einem qualvollen, grausamen Ende in einem abgelegenen Dorf, wohin sie von Hitler verbannt worden war. Jetzt erkannte sie mich und winkte, als sei ich verreist gewesen. So lachte und winkte sie immer nach Ausflügen.[20]

This passage not only conjures up an impossible meeting, but it does so by splitting the narrator's identity in that of the little girl she once was, and that of the woman she now is. I read the comparison between her present self and the memory she has of her mother as a gesture openly searching for identification, but this identification will forever be impossible.

"Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen" ends with a return to the present and the author's resolution to finally do what her teacher had asked: to write an essay about the excursion. Although Seghers was notoriously discreet about her private life, she did mention that as a child, she wrote stories, fairy tales which she would then give to her mother to read.[21] Her story "Post ins gelobte Land" obsessively thematizes the issue of writing and memory. And it explicitly connects the theme of writing to the memory of the mother, a connection which in "Der Ausflug" appears only in the form of a displacement.

"Post ins gelobte Land" tells the story of a Jewish family, the Grünbaums, who, at the end of the 19th century, escape from a pogrom in Poland. The family flees, first to Vienna, then to Silesia. They take with them their son-in-law Nathan Levi and their daughter's son who was born just before their daughter died in the pogrom. With the help of Nathan's brother, Salomon, the family finally ends up in Paris. Much of the story focuses on the grandson's, Jacques', gradual assimilation into what he comes to consider as his nation, a process which is described as the natural fusion of an older with a newer identity: "wie sich zwei Rinden übereinander um einen jungen Baum legen."[22] Shortly after Jacques Levi's marriage to the daughter of his father's friend, Nathan Levi decides to leave for Palestine. His son, now a famous doctor, promises to

write regularly. However, Jacques discovers that he is terminally ill soon after his father has left. Jacques begins to write letters in advance, making his wife promise that after his death she will continue sending them to his father. She keeps her promise even after she is forced to leave Paris in 1940.

Just as *Die Toten* incessantly returns to its first scene, Erwin's death, "Post ins gelobte Land" repeatedly returns to the death of the young mother. But unlike *Die Toten*, it also ends with the death of a young mother. Like Seghers' own mother, Jacques Levi's wife disappears, as we learn at the end of the story: "Sie bekamen nach einiger Zeit nur die Nachricht, die Frau mit dem kranken Kind sei irgendwohin verschleppt worden" (P/175). In this instance, the identificatory process is more explicit: the flight of Jacques Levi's wife and son from Paris toward southern France verbatim reproduces accounts Seghers has given of her own escape from the advancing German army accompanied by her children, just as the young woman in the story is accompanied by her son.

The link between mother and writing is also more openly thematized in "Post ins gelobte Land." Here, the process of writing--in the form of letters--constitutes memory, and at the centers of this memory reappears again and again the face of the Jewish mother. I would like to quote the passage from the text in which this nexus of writing and memory is thematized in the most complex way. This passage describes the moment when Jacques Levi's father receives the last letter from his son whom he still believes to be alive. In this letter, the dead son recounts a dream in which he accompanies his grandfather to the synagogue to light a candle in memory of his mother, who died in the pogrom:

> Mein lieber Vater, ich hatte in der Nacht geträumt, ich ginge durch die Höfe und Gänge von St. Paul, ich war ein kleiner Junge, ich ging ... an ... Großvaters Hand. Wir gingen die Wendeltreppe hinauf in den ersten Stock der Synagoge. Die Großmutter zeigte mir von oben herunter die Jahrzeitkerze, die für die Mutter angesteckt wurde. Ich sah auf das Flämmchen begierig hinunter (P/174).

This letter awakens a flurry of memories in Jacques' father, which finally condense once more in the "glänzend bleiche, zarte Gesicht" of his dead wife (P/175). "Post ins gelobte Land," I would thus argue, narrates the identification with the mother, her loss, and, once again, the connection between the figure of the mother and writing as the preservation of memory.

In the novels which I have discussed, the concept of motherhood is at once tied to writing as the work of memory and to writing as the work of repression. Seghers' three texts from this specific period allow us to read the conflicts and tensions which Seghers lived in this period; these conflicts have to do with, on the one hand, her own personal loss and her increasing awareness of the fate of Jews under Nazism,[23] both resulting in a strengthening of her Jewish identity, and, on the other hand, her desire to return to Germany and to participate in the construction of a new Germany--as a communist, whose Jewishness was supposed to be nothing but accidental, overridden by her identification with the "most progressive class" in German history.[24] As I have tried to show, it is around the concept of "motherhood" and its multiple determinations that the problems become readable.

Die Toten bleiben jung, "Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen" and "Post ins gelobte Land" thus exhibit a pattern of crisis and repression: the crisis of identity which--prior to 1943--was constructed as exclusively communist, and the repression--not of some essential other identity--but of a historical experience, the trauma of the Holocaust. In the texts from this specific period, which I would call a crisis period, the conflicts are exposed, whereas Seghers' later texts are marked by a more successful repression. Two more times Seghers will write texts in which Jewish figures are important: in 1948, "Die Hochzeit auf Haiti;" and in the 1960s, "Das Licht auf dem Galgen." In both cases she constructs them as male revolutionaries, subordinating their Jewishness to "the cause." Is it necessary to point out that their maleness further distances the pain associated with her mother? And that in these stories, the figure of the Jewish male revolutionary "objectifies" the problem--objectivity in the sense of the Lukácsian definition of realism?

I would like to make two more general points in concluding, the first pertaining to the author Anna Seghers--or better: the author function Anna Seghers, in the Foucaultian sense--, the second to the issue of the GDR's official national narrative, the legitimatory discourse of antifascism. By juxtaposing the grand national epic with the "smaller" forms of literature, even the explicitly private one of the autobiographical narrative, in which she addresses the issue of the persecution of the Jews, Seghers participated in the SED's attempt to designate these questions as private issues. For instance, in 1948, Walter Ulbricht attacked those who continued to pursue "private" interests instead of joining the avant-garde, that is "Schriftsteller, denen die

Aufarbeitung von Nationalsozialismus und Emigration wichtiger [ist] als die Bodenreform."[25] The subsequent East German canonization of Seghers' work reinforced this public/private split by singling out *Das siebte Kreuz* and *Die Toten*,[26] and connecting the latter with the "Väterliteratur" of Bredel and Marchwitza which tried to fix the public memory in terms of the antifascist narrative.[27] In the older East German criticism, "Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen" tended to disappear behind her grand narratives, and "Post ins gelobte Land" was only re-edited in 1963. What is necessary now, I think, is to reread her books against both her own containment strategies and those of the GDR's official "Kulturpolitik." We need readings which trace the conflicts in her work instead of reproducing the censoring gesture by simply taking over the definition of the author Anna Seghers constituted by the GDR canon.

My second point refers to the GDR's legitimatory discourse of antifascism, more specifically, its iconography, or what Irma Hanke calls the GDR's "Sakralkunst."[28] I would like to advance the thesis that the communist mother figures of this discourse and its iconography serve the same function as the figure of Marie in *Die Toten bleiben jung*--to deny the catastrophe of the Holocaust by focusing on the very image of life, the image of the mother. The aura of the sacred which envelops these figures--in literature, sculpture, painting--might thus be read as the trace left by the work of repression and denial. And in the context not only of the end of the East German state, but also the end of its founding discourse, Biermann's line--"Ich glaub, die Toten sind gestorben"--might then take on a very different meaning.

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1 From: Wolf Biermann, *Gut Kirschessen--DDR--ca ira!* (1990). I would like to thank Steve Brockmann for the lyrics.

2 The stories were published together with a third, "Das Ende," by Wieland Herzfelde's Aurora - Verlag.

3 In: Anna Seghers, *Die Macht der Worte. Reden - Schriften -Briefe* (Leipzig and Weimar: Gustav Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1979) 29-33.

4 See, for instance, Ernst Bloch, "Mythos Deutschland und die ärztlichen Mächte" (1933): "Wir betonen: echter Nation; denn 'Nation' ist gewiß eine Wirklichkeit und nicht allein, wie bisher immer, eine Ideologie. Erst echter Sozialismus aber holt auch echte Nation auf, als Sprach- und Kultureinheit." In: Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985) 98.

5 "Vaterlandsliebe", *Die Macht der Worte* 33.

6 Hans Marchwitza, *Die Kumiaks* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1965), originally published in 1934; *Die Heimkehr der Kumiaks* (Berlin und Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1964); *Die Kumiaks und ihre Kinder* (Berlin: Verlag Tribune, 1959 <?>). I will quote from Marchwitza's trilogy as follows: KI/plus page number.

7 Willi Bredel, *Die Väter* (Dortmund: Weltkreis Verlag, 1981), originally published in 1941; Willi Bredel, *Die Söhne* (Dortmund: Weltkreis Verlag, 1981), first published in 1949 and revised in 1952 and 1960; Willi Bredel, *Die Enkel*, vol. 1 (Dortmund: Weltkreis Verlag, 1981); Willi Bredel, *Die Enkel*, vol. 2 (Dortmund: Weltkreis Verlag, 1981), first published in 1953. I will quote from this text as follows: VWI/plus page number.

8 I have developed this reading in more detail in my article "At the Center an Absence: Foundationalist Narratives of the GDR and the Legitimatory Discourse of Antifascism," *Monatshefte* 84.1 (Spring 1992): 23-45.

9 The author whose very first novel, *Aufstand der Fischer von St. Barbara*, started with the image of a defeated rebellion understands the fragility of such constructs.

10 On the text's narrative structure, see: Sigrid Bock, "Erziehungsfunktion und Romanexperiment. Anna Seghers' *Die Toten bleiben jung*," *Erfahrung Exil. Antifaschistische Romane 1933-1945. Analysen*, ed. Sigrid Bock, Manfred Hahn (Berlin and Weimar, 1979) 408ff.; Renate Werner, "Exemplarisches Erzählen: Über Anna Seghers' *Die Toten bleiben jung*," *Deutschsprachige Exilliteratur*, ed. Wulf Koepke and Micheal Winkler (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984) 172ff.; Inge Diersen, "Kompositionsfragen in Anna Seghers' Romanen *Die Toten bleiben jung* und *Die Entscheidung*," *Junge Kunst* (Berlin), Heft 3 (1960): 49-53.

11 Anna Seghers, *Die Toten bleiben jung* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand Verlag, 1981). First published in 1949.

12 Anna Seghers, "Volk und Schriftsteller," in her *Die Macht der Worte* 48. On motherhood and National Socialism, see Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland. Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

13 She observes that in the culture of the post-war years, it was the notion of "Mütterlichkeit" which was experienced as being in crisis, not the notion of masculinity. Ursula Heukenkamp, "Das Frauenbild in der antifaschistischen Erneuerung der SBZ," *Wen kümmert's, wer spricht. Zur Literatur und Kulturgeschichte von Frauen aus Ost und West*, ed. Inge Stephen, Sigrid Weigel, Kerstin Wilhelms (Köln and Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1991) 10.

14 Ibid. The implicit result of this was, of course, blaming women for what had happened. In addition, she argues that underlying this appeal to motherhood was also the effort to restore traditional gender relations, after they were disrupted by the later war years (ibid. 11).

15 In an essay from 1944, Seghers defines the task of art in this specific period in the following way: "Wo und was

soll man umerziehen, wenn die Brüder und Väter mit nationalen Begründungen zum Abschlachten von Juden und zum Massenmord von Gefangenen abgerichtet wurden?... Die Künstler müssen die Begriffe von drei Werten in der deutschen Jugend neu erwecken: das Individuum, das Volk, die Menschheit ... Aber reichen sie aus, den Brüdern und Söhnen von Mördern und Banditen einen Anflug von menschlicher Würde nahezubringen?" (Anna Seghers, "Aufgaben der Kunst" in her *Kunstwerk und Wirklichkeit* 198f.).

16 On the relationship between feminine allegory and the body, see Sigrid Weigel, "Das Theater der weißen Revolution.' Körper und Verkörperung im Revolutionstheater von Heiner Müller und Georg Büchner": "Um die reine Idee zu verkörpern, muß der dar- oder vorgestellte Körper selbst als rein erscheinen" (163). On the woman figure as allegory for which men fight, see Gertraud Gutzmann, "Zum Stellenwert des Spanischen Bürgerkriegs in Anna Seghers' Romanen *Die Entscheidung* und *Das Vertrauen*, in: Inge Stephan, ed., *Wen kümmert's wer spricht?* 201 and 205. On Seghers' women figures and sexuality, see Irene Lorisika, *Frauendarstellungen bei Irmgard Keun und Anna Seghers*.

17 Anna Seghers, "Volk und Schriftsteller," in her *Die Macht der Worte* 52.

18 On this aspect, see "Being Jewish in the Other Germany: An Interview with Thomas Eckert," *New German Critique* 38 (Spring/Summer 1986): 74 and 75. On the general question of Jews in East Germany, see Robin Ostow, *Jews in Contemporary East Germany. The Children of Moses in the Land or Marx* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

19 Christa Wolf, "Das siebte Kreuz," in Sonja Hilzinger, ed., *"Das siebte Kreuz" von Anna Seghers. Text, Daten, Bilder* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1990) 148.

20 Anna Seghers, *Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen*, 10th ed. (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand Verlag, 1989) 80.

21 See Bernhard Greiner, "Der Bann der Zeichen: Anna Seghers' Entwürfe der Identitätsfindung," *Probleme deutscher Identität*, ed. Paul Gerhard and Heinrich Mohr (Bonn: Bouvier, 1983) 148.

22 Anna Seghers, "Post ins gelobte Land," *Erzählungen*, vol. I (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand Verlag, 1977) 161. On the topic of assimilation in "Post," see Kathleen LaBahn, *Anna Seghers' Exile Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986) 21-22.

23 In contrast to the official party line, Seghers began to emphasize the centrality of antisemitism to National Socialism in her writings around 1943. See, for instance, "An die Untergrundkämpfer," *Die Macht der Worte* 131.

24 Alexander Stephan accentuates her uneasiness about returning to Germany, something which resonates in her letter to Lore Wolf: "Meine Mutter wurde nach Polen deportiert und ermordet, obwohl wir ihr noch Visen verschafften, aber um Tage zu spät. Ich habe bis auf ein paar Freunde niemand Lebendes in Deutschland." Alexander Stephan, "'Ich habe das Gefühl, ich bin die Eiszeit versetzt' ... Zur Rückkehr von Anna Seghers aus dem Exil," *Germanic Review* 3 (1987): 145.

25 Alexander Stephan 148.

26 See, for instance, Christel Berger, *Gewissensfrage Antifaschismus. Analysen - Interpretationen - Interviews* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1990) 12ff.

27 On the general topic of the construction of memory in the GDR, see: Sonia Combe, "Memorie collective et histoire officielle," *Esprit* (October 1987): 36-49.

28 Irma Hanke, *Alltag und Politik: zur politischen Kultur einer unpolitischen Gesellschaft. Eine Untersuchung zur erzählenden Gegenwartsliteratur der DDR in den 70er Jahren* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987) 263.