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Searching for the (M)Other: The Rhetoric of Longing in Post-Holocaust Poems by Nelly Sachs and Rose Ausländer

Kathrin Bower

The post-Holocaust poems of Nelly Sachs and Rose Ausländer demonstrate shifts toward experimentation in form and message, particularly in relation to religious belief and the expressive potential of poetic language. The experience of the Holocaust forced both authors to confront the interconnections between their Jewishness, their relationship to the German language, and their displacements as homeless exiles. They turned to poetry as a means of mediating the past in the present, and their post-Holocaust writings represent acts of both remembrance and reproduction. As victims and witnesses to suffering, devastation, and loss, Sachs and Ausländer appealed to images of the maternal in an effort to recreate the intimacy and security of the irretrievably lost past, adapting the multivalence of the Mother for their own purposes in the pursuit of a new language of faith. (KB)

Every God, even including the God of the Word, relies on a mother Goddess. —Julia Kristeva ("Stabat Mater" 176)

The biographies of German-Jewish poets Nelly Sachs (1891–1970) and Rose Ausländer (1901–88) are conjoined by the common experiences of growing up in culturally cosmopolitan environments conducive to assimilation and the subsequent violent rupture of this peaceful world by the rise of Nazism. For Nelly Sachs, this was pre-war Berlin; for Ausländer, the city of Czernowitz in the Bukovina. Their writings diverge, however, in the responses to and representations of the past, the trauma of exile, and the shock of the Holocaust. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Sachs and Ausländer confronted their feelings of trauma and loss, displacement and homelessness through the medium of the poetic word. Their poetic transformations of these experiences demonstrate both parallels—in theme and message—and differences—in form as well as in attitude towards

language's capacity to express and represent the tensions between mourning and hope.

Nelly Sachs was born in Berlin as the only child of an assimilated German-Jewish couple. Her father, a manufacturer and inventor, placed high value on German cultural traditions. A sensitive, introverted child, she was drawn to music, dance, poetry, and German Romanticism. She did not identify herself as a Jew and it was not until the enforced implementation of Nazi racial ideology that she confronted her Jewish heritage. Sachs reacted to this coerced categorization by immersing herself in learning the teachings and traditions of Judaism, and was most intrigued by the Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism as these were described and transmitted in the works of Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber. Her readings and reflections on Jewish mysticism further developed her synthetic approach to religion and belief, and resulted in a melding of elements from Christian and Jewish traditions, both in her spiritual conceptions and in her poetry. After fleeing to Sweden together with her aging mother in 1940, Sachs settled in Stockholm and eked out a modest existence by translating and writing poetry. In 1952, she became a Swedish citizen, but although she was welcomed there and had no desire to return to Germany, she never truly felt at home either in Sweden or in the Swedish language and remained loyal to her mother tongue as her language of poetic creation.

Ausländer was born Rosalie Scherzer in German-speaking Czernowitz, the capital of the Bukovina (then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire) in 1901. She was raised in a consciously Jewish household familiar with both the traditions and languages of Judaism. The culturally rich environment and the atmosphere of tolerance in Czernowitz left lasting impressions on her, and her poetry reflects a certain nostalgia for a lost and irretrievable childhood past. Unlike Sachs, who did not make her exodus from her home city until 1940, Ausländer was forced into a life of wandering and exile already in 1921. As a young woman, she emigrated to the United States and eventually settled in New York. She returned to Czernowitz at regular intervals, however, to care for her ill mother. During one of these care missions to Czernowitz in 1939, the outbreak of war made it impossible for her to leave again. She and her mother survived the German occupation in the Czernowitz ghetto, escaping deportation and the fate of tens of thousands of Romanian Jews in the camps of Transnistria by going into hiding.

After the war, Ausländer returned once again to the United States, hoping to earn enough so that her mother could join her in New York. Her mother's death in 1947 before this reunion could take place triggered a nervous collapse that left Ausländer unable to work or write for almost a year. When she began writing again, she wrote only in English. The return to her native German in 1956 took place as inexplicably as her

retreat from it, and her use of German as a medium of poetic creation brought with it dramatic differences. Gone was the conventional, rhymed verse that had characterized her pre-war poetry. Her lyric became terse and spare, yet in a form that underscored the multivalence inherent in the word. Her poems after 1956 are alive with neologisms, metaphors, and wordplay, but most characteristic is an unmitigated longing for words to give voice to the past and shape to the future.

As survivors of the Holocaust, Sachs and Ausländer shared a commitment to preserving the memories of that catastrophe and the suffering that accompanied it. Faced with events that defied understanding, both looked to new means of figuring the disjunctive relationship between faith and history, for metaphors and articulations reflective of the conflicts between experience and belief. In different ways, their writings demonstrate a distancing from conventional structures and the security of a mellifluous rhyme, moving instead into a realm of equivocation, fragmentation, and condensation that characterizes much post-Holocaust poetry. Sachs reveals the destabilization of form and familiarity by breaking off lines abruptly and by synthesizing images that seem to aspire to the mystical realm while still trailing roots in the reality of human suffering. Ausländer's lyric becomes increasingly spare and condensed, yet the paucity of words and the brevity of the lines heighten rather than diminish the multiplicity and elasticity of meaning.

For both, the Holocaust catalyzed a crisis of belief and raised questions about the nature of God as well as the capacity to keep the faith in the face of extremity. In their responses to this crisis, they came to question the supremacy of a monotheistic God whose apparent indifference to the fate of his people was shattering and inexplicable if one had accepted the conception of a benevolent and omnipotent divinity. Their questions and explorations led them in search of alternative spiritual images capable of expressing the simultaneity of good and evil, a search that resurrected older configurations of the life cycle as an alternation of destruction and regeneration: the cycle of existence as portrayed in Hasidic mysticism and traditional Jewish theology and as embodied in the even more archaic figure of the Cosmic Mother, the maternal goddess conjoining life and death, creation and destruction.¹

Both Sachs and Ausländer lost their fathers long before the onset of World War II. Sachs's father died in 1930. The death of Ausländer's father in 1920 catalyzed the first major rupture in her life, forcing her to leave both mother and motherland and venture forth on her own. The poetic depictions of paternal deities in Sachs's and Ausländer's works after the Holocaust indicate a kind of delayed response to their fathers' early deaths, offering a contradictory combination of reverence and disappointment: a nostalgic reverence for the deceased, biological father and a disappointment mixed with lingering expectations in the Divine

Father (Dinesen 30 ff.).² The loss of the father effectively intensified and enhanced the maternal bond, which in Sachs's case had been especially close even before her father's death. Once they had settled in Stockholm, Sachs's bond to her mother grew even stronger. Margarethe Sachs was all that she had left of the home and family she had known, and Sachs looked to her mother as an anchoring force, the connection to the reality and home that had been, treating her as patient and muse, confidante and child (Fritsch-Vivié 94).

Ausländer's relationship to her mother was also strong and complex, and many of her poems reflect her attempts to come to terms with her conflicting desires for a reunion with the maternal force even as she remained aware of its destructive potential. Common to the poetry of both Sachs and Ausländer was the turn to the maternal image as a means of negotiating a destabilized relationship to reality.

In the discussion to follow, I examine contrasting figurations of the paternal and the maternal in poems after the Holocaust and explore how myth, archetype, and Jewish and Christian theology intersect in these representations. The cosmic figurations of Father and Mother stand in contrast to more terrestrial and domestic images of the mother in poems thematizing the mother/daughter relationship. To date there has been no systematic reading of the maternal in the poetry of either writer. Claudia Beil's recent comparative study addresses aspects of the maternal, but her primary concern is with the mystical and Romantic resonances in Sachs's and Ausländer's writings and how their poetry exemplifies what she regards as a successful synthesis of German and Jewish traditions. While not denying the significance of mysticism in Sachs's and Ausländer's works, I see the maternal as a provocative point of departure for a re-reading of their lyric that takes into account the destabilization of faith and identity engendered by the trauma of the Holocaust.

In Sachs's 1947 collection *In den Wohnungen des Todes* (In the Residences of Death), God is an abstraction, a name spoken with reverence but whose divine presence is absent from the events of the world. This God is an entity apart, hidden, and inexplicable, an essence mediated only in and through dreams. The image of the mother, in contrast, appears repeatedly in many manifestations, both positive and negative: as a nurturing force that ensures peace and love, as the vessel and guardian of memory and suffering, as maternal animal and protectress, and as a barrier to the child's painful acquisition of autonomy. Yet at moments the lyric persona feels bereft of all hope and faith and identifies with a collective of orphans, poignantly articulated by the voice of the "we" in the poem "Chor der Waisen" ("Chorus of Orphans") from the 1946 cycle "Chöre nach der Mitternacht" ("Choruses after Midnight," *Fahrt* 54–55):

WIR WAISEN

Wir klagen der Welt:
 Herabgehauen hat man unseren Ast
 Und ins Feuer geworfen—
 Brennholz hat man aus unseren Beschützern gemacht—
 Wir Waisen liegen auf den Feldern der Einsamkeit.

.....

Wir Waisen
 Wir klagen der Welt:
 Steine sind unser Spielzeug geworden,
 Steine haben Gesichter, Vater- und Muttergesichter
 Sie verwelken nicht wie Blumen, sie beißen nicht wie Tiere—
 Und sie brennen nicht wie Dörrholz, wenn man sie in den Ofen wirft—
 Wir Waisen wir klagen der Welt:
 Welt warum hast du uns die weichen Mütter genommen
 Und die Väter, die sagen: Mein Kind du gleichst mir!
 Wir Waisen gleichen niemand mehr auf der Welt!
 O Welt
 Wir klagen dich an!³

This poem uses the form of a lament together with images of severance and destruction to convey the injustice that was done while the "world" stood by and did nothing. Yet the accusation is directed at a disturbingly anonymous object: "one" has done these things and the world stands accused, but who exactly is to be blamed? The depersonalization of the perpetrator in effect heightens the sense of frustration and loneliness expressed by the orphans. Bereft of mother and father (although not of their memories), and of the opportunity to exact retribution from their oppressors, the orphans can only impotently cry out their denunciations to the world. Their only solace is in the durability of stone, the stone that now holds the memories and legacies of the annihilated parents and the lost past.

The tone of lament and denunciation in Sachs's "Chor der Waisen" underscores the sense of bereavement and betrayal felt by the survivors, but addresses the accusation to the world. In Ausländer's "Vater unser" (Our Father, 6: 274), the accusation is levelled directly at the Divine Father, who is held responsible for the abandonment of his children. The divine claim both to paternity and omnipotence is derisively refuted. In the aftermath of catastrophe and horror, language and the possibility of prayer are called into question and by extension also the validity of the divine word. The credibility of the Father, the power of his word, and the legitimacy of his name are the subject of Ausländer's critique in "Vater unser," a conscious parody of the Christian prayer that provokes reflection on the degree to which Judaism and Christianity, as well as the crisis of belief and the crisis of expression, are interrelated.

Vater unser
 nimm zurück deinen Namen
 wir wagen nicht
 Kinder zu sein

Wie
 mit erstickter Stimme
 Vater unser sagen

Zitronenstern
 an die Stirn genagelt

Lachte irr der Mond
 Trabant unserer Träume
 lachte der tote Clown
 der uns einen Salto versprach

Vater unser
 wir geben dir zurück
 deinen Namen
 Spiel weiter den Vater
 im kinderlosen
 luftleeren Himmel⁴

By virtue of his exaltedness and his distance from his followers, God as the heavenly Father has sacrificed both credibility and loyalty. Ausländer characterizes the “we” of the once faithful as anxious children, abandoned by the father they had trusted in to protect them. The demand that this false Father take back his name reflects both disappointment and bitterness at the Father’s failings, reactions among the “we” that have a stifling effect in the second stanza. The demand that the name be taken back is made after the fact, however, and is preceded by an inability to pray. In the third stanza, the synthesis of Christian and Jewish traditions becomes obvious in the use of the yellow star image. As the symbol of Jewish oppression, not only during the Holocaust but also much earlier in the long history of anti-Semitism, the yellow star here becomes a hybrid of the Nazi-assigned stigma, the mark of Cain, and the crown of thorns in Christ’s martyrdom. The Jews are the chosen people, but this chosenness carries with it a stigma, the association of difference and privilege that inspires maltreatment and hate from the other peoples of the world. In the denunciation of the name of the Father there is a mixing of Jewish and Christian conceptions of deity, of the God of the covenant and the merciful Father of the New Testament, but neither one has proven deserving of unquestioning devotion or childlike faith.

Bitterness and disappointment toward an absent God and the lack of divine intervention do not, however, lead to rejection of the Jewish religious world view *per se*, but rather to a selective appropriation of

those elements, especially those drawn from Hasidic mysticism that seem to address the poet's specific situation. Thus the figure of the Shekhinah, the female-gendered emanation of God-in-the-World and the tenth and lowest *sefirah* in the hierarchy of divine emanations outlined in the Kabbalah,⁵ becomes a figure of identification. The Shekhinah as divine presence is simultaneously part of and apart from God and serves as the mediator between divine and human realms. As the representation of exile, as divine presence in an atmosphere of divine absence, the Shekhinah embodies the diaspora, shame, mourning, and remembrance, wandering the earth in dark garments (Scholem, *Idea* 74). Despite her apparent benevolence, however, the Shekhinah, like the ancient mother that serves as her model, is a conglomeration of both good and terrible aspects: she is both "the merciful mother of Israel" and the "Tree of Death" (Scholem, *Kabbalah* 107). Her attribution as the mother of Israel (Scholem, *Trends* 230) associates her with the condition of exile, defining the historical situation of the Jews, and the fundamental ambivalence that informs the portrayal of the Shekhinah reflects this connection to the Diaspora. The moon and the ocean also represent the Shekhinah and illustrate by their very nature the cyclical condition of redemption and exile, implying that this alternation is as regular and natural as the waxing and waning of the moon or the ebb and flow of the tide (Scholem, *Kabbalah* 151 f.; *Trends* 220).

The Shekhinah, undecidable, hopeful, subject to the vicissitudes of the people's faith and symbolic of their redemption as well as their guilt (Scholem, *Kabbalah* 108), serves for *Ausländer* as a dualistic mediator between human and divine, imaged in alternating and overlapping figurations of mother and other, and invested with the potential for both good and evil, presence and absence. The Kabbalistic conception of the Shekhinah explicitly indicates that her relative distance to and from the chosen people is determined by their faith and actions. If they doubt and commit evil acts, she retreats further into a state of exile. Conversely, she is drawn closer if the people adhere to the principles of their faith and commit themselves to good works and the study of Scripture (Unterman 181). The figure of the Shekhinah as a construct that contains opposition and conflict without reconciling them offers *Ausländer* a possibility of negotiating a religious understanding after the Holocaust, one grounded neither in divine omnipotence and exclusionary monotheism nor in an acceptance of the ultimate triumph of evil.

In Sachs's "Immer hinter den Rändern der Welt" (Forever beyond the limits of the world, *Fahrt* 194–95), the poetic subject allies herself with a series of archetypal female representations of marginalization: the sixth-century Christian saint Genoveva, unjustly banished with her newborn child; the Shekhinah, who also represents the state of Israel in exile; and finally the mythical figure of Melusine,⁶ the embodiment of otherness as

half-woman/half-animal. By linking herself to these diverse representations of excluded otherness, the lyric persona conjoins the Jewish mystical tradition with Christian legend and folk mythology.

IMMER HINTER den Rändern der Welt
die ausgesetzte Seele Genoveva wartet
mit dem Kinde Schmerzensreich
im Heimweggestrahl.

Auch *Schechina* kannst du sagen,
die Staubgekrönte,
die durch Israel Schluchzende

Und die heilige Tierfrau
mit den sehenden Wunden im Kopf,
die heilen nicht
aus Gotteserinnerung.

In ihren Regenbogenpupillen
alle Jäger haben
die gelben Scheiterhaufen der Angst entzündet.

Auch mein Fuß
hier auf der Straße
stößt an den Aschenhorizont—
ein Granatsplitter,
nachtbehautes Fragezeichen,
liegt in der Fahrtrichtung.

Aus der Kriegerpyramide,
blitzverkleidet,
erschießt wehrlose Sehnsucht
die Liebe
im letzten Schwanenschrei—⁷

The banished maternal figure of Genoveva pining away with homesickness at the edges of the world parallels the image of the Shekhinah, the feminization of Israel. In fact, the two figures are presented as equivalents: “Auch *Schechina* kannst du sagen” (Shekhinah you can also say). True to Buber’s depiction of the Shekhinah in *Die Legende des Baalschem* (The Legend of Baalschem, 27) with which Sachs was familiar, she is portrayed here in the second stanza as the suffering woman who weeps and wanders.

With the addition of the figure of the *Tierfrau* with her prescient wounds, the maternal figural chain becomes associated with memory, a connection significant for the poet’s own perceived duty as the guardian and vessel of the historical, collective, and individual memories of her people. This animal-woman holds the pain, suffering, and fear of the

victims in her eyes, which reflect the fires set by the perpetrators. The heterogeneity of the victims and their experiences is expressed in the fourth stanza in the spectrum of colors refracted in these human/animal eyes, a colorful multiplicity that is contrasted by the monochromatic and single-minded destructiveness of the oppressors. The yellow of the bonfires recalls the stigmatic yellow star used to identify the Jews in Nazi Germany and, like fire, it has an almost elemental, mythic quality, with a history traceable back to before the thirteenth century as the color of choice for designating the Jewish Other.

In the fifth stanza the lyric persona joins the succession of archetypal female figures of exile, suffering, and memory, thereby connecting the mythic past with the literal present. Her figurative foot stubs against the horizon of ashes left by the bonfires that had been burned into the eyes of the *Tierfrau*. Her path leads through a wasteland, a war-ravaged landscape represented *pars pro toto* by a piece of shrapnel: "ein Granatsplitter, / nachtbehautes Fragezeichen, / liegt in der Fahrtrichtung" (a grenade splinter, / night-housed question mark, / lies in the forward direction). The grenade splinter is not only a synecdoche for the destruction wrought by the war, but in its physical shape as a question mark lying in the path also symbolizes the questioning and doubt that causes the lyric subject to deliberate about how and where to continue her wandering journey. The entrance of the lyric persona in this stanza signals her participation in the process of mourning and memory. Yet the mission to carry on the legacy passed down to her is one fraught with longing and despair and the final lines of the poem leave the outcome open. The dangers to the continuity of memory thematized semantically in the text are formally reinforced by the brutal dash at the end of the last line, where both form and content emphasize the tone of dramatic undecidability. The ambiguity of the poem's end is deepened by the apparent contradiction between the hope for a better world implied in the appearance of love and the portrayal of this appearance as a swan song, a last outcry, which is cut off or interrupted by the final dash and thus left open and undecided.

In the first poem in the 1966 cycle "Die Suchende" ("The Seeker"), Sachs transforms the mythological figure of the Shekhinah into a trope for sorrow, loss, and the lyrical search for home (*Suche* 100):

Sie sucht sie sucht
 brennt die Luft mit Schmerz an
 die Wände der Wüste wissen von Liebe
 die jung in den Abend steigt
 diese Vorfeier auf den Tod—

 Sie sucht den Geliebten
 findet ihn nicht

muß die Welt neu herstellen
 ruft den Engel
 eine Rippe aus ihrem Körper zu schneiden
 bläst sie mit göttlichem Atem an
 weißes Palmenblatt im Schlaf
 und die Adam träumend gezogen
 Die Suchende in ihrer Armut
 nimmt zum Abschied die Krume Erde in den Mund
 aufersteht weiter—⁸

The female seeker in this poem is in mourning, but her mourning is neither passive nor accepting. On the contrary, she assumes the role traditionally associated with Adam, establishing an alternative tradition of female precedence and transformation by fashioning an object out of her own rib to compensate for her love and pain. She has a privileged relationship to divinity and creation. The reference to godly breath is a further allusion to Genesis (2:7) with its portrayal of the (re)generative power of divine exhalation: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The seeker's aspirations to imitate the divine creation of man remain unrealized, however, fixed at the level of a dream, and in her disappointment she ingests the clod of earth that she had sought to imbue with life. The clod of earth that was to become her self-created other becomes instead a part of her, incorporated as substitute gratification for both her desire and her loss.

In the sixth poem in this cycle, the seeker represents not only the condition of exile but also an embodiment of a line of demarcation, a border between the familiar, terrestrial realm and the *horror vacui*⁹ of the unknown (*Suche* 102):

Wo sie steht
 ist das Ende der Welt
 das Unbekannte zieht ein wo eine Wunde ist
 aber Träume und Visionen
 Wahnsinn und Schrift der Blitze
 diese Flüchtlinge von anderswo her
 warten bis Sterben ist geboren
 dann reden sie—¹⁰

The seeker as the poetic figuration of the Shekhinah here is missing something that would provide her with a sense of wholeness and harmony, a masculinized other whose loss she mourns. In Kabbalistic mysticism, the Shekhinah is portrayed as joining with God in his male aspect in an act of erotic mystical union, the *hieros gamos*, which was viewed as the symbolic marriage of God and Israel and a celebration of the covenant (Scholem, *Kabbalah* 138). In Sachs's cycle, the female seeker is

described as the source of longing in the world, the embodiment of a plea for reunion, incomplete without her Other, figured in the closing poem as a strange hybrid of maternal and paternal qualities:

Was für eine Himmelsrichtung hast du eingenommen
 gen Norden ist der Grabstein grün
 wächst da die Zukunft
 dein Leib ist eine Bitte im Weltall: komm
 die Quelle sucht ihr feuchtes Vaterland
 Gebogen ohne Richtung ist das Opfer—¹¹

This image is paradoxical in its associative conflation of moistness and paternity. The adjective *feucht* (humid) inspires associations with swamps, oceans, and fecundity, which are more often connected with the maternal than with either paternity or fatherland. This play on the concept of wetness and its liquid, oceanic associations in anticipation of a return to origins occurs frequently in Sachs's poetry, where elemental images of water and air recur as multivalent metaphors for maternity, memory, mystical union, and female creative and destructive power. The final line, broken off like an open question, recalls both the form and meaning of the question mark-shaped piece of shrapnel in "Immer hinter den Rändern der Welt" (Forever beyond the limits of the world, *Fahrt* 194–95). Here, however, the victim has become the physical manifestation of that unanswered question, bent with the weight of inquiry and uncertainty that seemingly has neither direction nor resolution.

The ambiguity surrounding the figurations of the cosmic maternal demonstrate that neither Ausländer nor Sachs is engaged in simple substitution, rejecting untenable faith in an omnipotent Father in favor of unequivocal belief in a maternal power. The absence of the father does not result in an unwavering belief in the mother as a protective force and eternal presence. The figuration of the mother is fraught with conflict and contradiction, compounded by fear of loss, desire for power, and longing for peace. The maternal metaphor that best demonstrates the ambivalent interconnections of desire and resistance, the longing for dissolution and autonomy, is the recurring association of the mother with the sea that permeates the poetry of both. The oceanic maternal metaphor represents the fluctuation of opposing forces as well as the oscillation between fear and desire that characterizes the lyrical mother/daughter relationship. The use of oceanic imagery ranges from allusions to the sea, as a simultaneously creative and destructive originary force, to anthropomorphic representations of the ocean, as a wild and passionate female entity.

The desire for union with the maternal ocean is simultaneously escapist, emancipatory, and erotic, a combination of attraction and repulsion that marks the daughter poet's relationship to her mother muse. In the poems "Pupillen" (Pupils, 2: 89) and "Meer II" (Ocean II, 2: 306–07),

Ausländer plays with the multivalence of the sea as a trope, combining its various associations as a primal originary source and as the fluid commotion of life and death, passion and submersion. "Pupillen" opens with a question that already presumes an affirmative answer, a question intended to provoke the reader into reflecting on the commonality of all origin represented by the maternal sea:

War nicht das Meer das wellengestufte unsere Mutter
 mit Brüsten voll salziger Milch
 War nicht der Fisch der silbergeackte unser Bruder
 brüderlich herzlich im Schweigen
 Wohnten wir nicht Äonen im kühlen Brand der Wogen
 Waren die strahlenden Sterne uns nicht gewogen

 Sie leugnen es nicht sie schweigen beredt
 Nachkommen sind wir nicht erste nicht letzte
 Urrunde Muscheln sind wir wo die Mutter noch träumt
 noch seufzt noch das Wiegenlied singt
 noch die Perlen weint ihre Tränen

 Sieh die Pupille die Perle im Glanz unsres Blicks
 Perlmutterrund ist die Welt in ihr die sternende Erde
 grün ist der Grund des Meers wie das Eden der Erde
 wie der erstaunte Wald im See der Pupille¹²

The opening question appears to the poetic voice more rhetorical than real since she seems already convinced of the answer. In "Pupillen" the sea is figured as maternal infinitude, forever bringing forth new life and reabsorbing the lost and the mourned. But despite its encompassing capacity for both life and death, the sea in the opening stanza represents a utopian potential, albeit a remembered and not a present one, for harmonious co-existence. This utopian condition is not denied in the shift from the past to the present tense in the second strophe, but it is represented as a lost condition, or at best the residue of dreams. Yet, afloat in the expansive generosity of the ocean, the eye of the poetic persona reflects on the implications such a condition has for the world. The reflection of the originary ocean in the eye of every beholder implied in the poem's last lines is both a signal and a reminder of those common origins that should encourage harmonious coexistence. With the comparison of the elemental ocean to the fluid lake of the human eye, the poetic voice connects the self with infinity, collapsing the boundaries between the self and the world as well as between the terrestrial and the celestial, the mortal and the eternal. This parallel between the eye (as synecdoche for the poetic "I") and the sea is an empowering and hopeful gesture strengthened by the references to paradise and the implied desire to celebrate the positive potential for life in this world.

This all-encompassing, oceanic, self-regenerating environment is not taken for granted but is rather noted with some perplexity in *Ausländer's* "Meer II" (2: 306)—a perplexity that is accompanied by the shift from the collective "we" of "Pupillen" to the solitary "I" in relation to the sea.

Ich weiß nicht wie es kam
 daß alles was ich sehe und höre
 zu Meer wird
 der Fremde der Nachbar der Freund
 Wellen
 die Stadt
 brüllende Brandung
 Worte
 Bewegung Schimmer und Schaum

Ich
 eine ungenaue Gestalt aus Tropfen
 deine authentische Tochter
 Meer
 zusammengeballt
 und wieder in deine
 Wasserschaft gesogen
 flüssiger Staub

 Wir atmen dich ein
 du atmest uns aus
 mich und meine Quecksilberschwester
 die Fische
 unser Wald aus
 Korallen Seemoos Sirenen
 hat viele Funktionen
 den Tauchern vertraut¹³

Here the poetic persona speaks directly in the first person singular, admitting her filial relationship to the ocean that formed her and addressing it as her mother. This admission of daughterhood, however, does not give the poetic voice a privileged relationship to the life force. She is aware that her appearance in the cycle is momentary, that she too will be reabsorbed in the flow of appearance and disappearance that is echoed in the visual structure of the poem, especially in the weaving and undulating lines of the opening stanzas. The daughter-persona feels a sense of community and solidarity in this amniotic atmosphere, where the symbiosis between mother ocean and her "children" is as natural and regular as breathing. But the oceanic mother also embodies a vast wildness and a violent playfulness that the lyrical persona envies, suffers, and desires:

Den Delphin auf dem Rücken
 reitest du nachts
 durch Sternsteppen
 dein saftiges Fleisch
 von Haien und Walen massiert
 der heilige Monster Leviathan
 wacht über deine Seele

Dich begleiten darf ich nicht
 nur meine Nerven folgen dir
 aber auch das ist ein Übergriff
 und ich leide die Strafe der
 Steine Scherben gemarterten Muscheln
 Ich trink mich satt an Salz
 Schlamm und den Schickanen der Wetter¹⁴

She recognizes that a joining with this maternal element is taboo, that even her desire to imagine such a union is subject to punishment, yet she persists in her fantasy of incestuous fulfillment with the maternal substance that both identifies and excludes her. This fantasy escalates from an enjoyment of being tossed about by the waves to the wish to be impregnated by the phallic oceanic mother, who in her infinitude displays both male and female characteristics:

Auf einer Schäre
 unter Ravello
 möchte ich deinen letzten Anprall erfahren
 deinen kühlen Kuß ohne Kontur
 Eine Perle wächst mir ins Fleisch
 eine harte Träne
 du wächst in mir Meer
 du wächst in mir
 flüssig und hart¹⁵

The choice of the pearl image here remarkably parallels that in Sachs's poem "Verzeiht ihr meine Schwestern" (Forgive me my sisters) from the *Glühende Rätsel* (Glowing Enigmas) cycle (*Suche* 27):

Verzeiht ihr meine Schwestern
 ich habe euer Schweigen in mein Herz genommen
 Dort wohnt es und leidet die Perlen eures Leides

 Es reitet eine Löwin auf den Wogen Oceanas
 eine Löwin der Schmerzen
 die ihre Tränen längst dem Meer gab¹⁶

In contrast to the bold eroticism of Ausländer's imagery, however, Sachs here uses the oceanic trope as a representation of suffering. The sisterly

identification with the silent oppressed is internalized like a pearl, an impregnation with sorrow that does not climax in a dissolution of a sensual, celebratory *jouissance*, but rather reflects the hardened pain of the tormented that can only join with but not be washed away by the salt waters of the sea.

In Ausländer's "Meer II," the daughter's narcissistic desire to join with the watery mirror that reflects her own image is a wish to be reunited with her origins, to combat the fragmentation resulting from separation from the maternal by dissolving into an ocean that is at once the other and the self. She finds herself both reflected and inscribed by the sea of her desire. As a reflection she is outside and separated, but as a mussel-like body etched with markings of her origins, she is physically (re)marked as an insider. The surface of the sea becomes the permeable boundary between the self and/as other and the desire for dissolution is concurrently a desire to disrupt this state of suspension in favor of an erotic union that is paradoxically both expansive and explosive. Through her longing for the oceanic mother the poetic daughter is able to represent her self, utilizing the ocean as a maternal mirror in which she engages in an act of reflection that is at once narcissistic and escapist (Kristeva, *Tales* 42). This self, however, is diffuse, pluralistic, unbounded like the sea it seeks to emulate and converge with in an act of desire that can be read as both destructive (in that the boundaries of the self as a separate entity are dissolved) and emancipatory (in that the self has become open and expansive).

The depiction of the ocean as a kind of mirror for a plurality of selves occurs elsewhere in Ausländer's work. In the poem "Treue I" (Allegiance I, 8: 139), the sea is portrayed as the loyal servant to the lyric persona who, in contrast to the poetic daughter in "Meer II," here seems to be in control of oceanic power. In "Treue I," the otherwise omnipotent ocean is figured as merely a lady-in-waiting, attending the narcissistic musings of the poetic subject with multiple mirrors. The infinitude of the ocean has here become a quality claimed by and embodied in the now unabashedly multiple poetic self.

Mein Meer
bewahrt mir die Treue
in seinen Spiegeln
find ich mich wieder
vielfältig

Es singt mich
zur Ruh zur Unruh
aufgelöst
in endlose Rhythmen
singt es

meinen wässrigen Leib
in den Sand¹⁷

The multiplicity nurtured in the maternal mirror and the spectral affirmation of the first stanza is offset by the tonal shifts in the concluding stanza. The ocean's aspect has undergone a sea change from visual to aural and the replication of the image that had affirmed the self becomes equivocal in its tonal variation. The melody brings both harmony and discord, a sense of peace but also disquiet accompanying the fear that the submission to the oceanic maternal lullaby will ultimately lead to the dissolution of the self.

The oceanic imaging of the mother in these poems represents the dualism inherent in the maternal trope and the poet's attitude towards it. The ocean as mother offers the possibility of a return to an originary state of communion with nature and the world as well as the danger of dissolution and engulfment. Thus it inspires oppositional fears in the daughter-poet: the fear of separation as well as the fear of destruction. This oceanic maternal metaphor serves as a point at which the figurations of the Great Mother of myth and the Terrible Mother of ego psychology converge. The poetic attitude of simultaneous longing for union and fear of dissolution evidenced in both Sachs's and Ausländer's oceanic images connects with the ambivalent figuration of the preoedipal mother in ego psychology: "all-giving and all-punishing, an all-powerful being who contains within her the means of satisfying every desire" (Waugh 65). This mother is simultaneously terrible and benevolent and inspires conflicting feelings in the child: fear of destruction and fear of separation. The tension within this polarity is parallel to the tensions that define and inform the mother/daughter relationship and its suspension of an ambivalent oscillation between longing and resentment, mourning and bitterness, desire and language.

Sachs's "Rufst du nun den einen Namen verzweifelt" ("If now you desperately call the one name," *Suche* 18), demonstrates the intersection of desire, disappointment, and dissolution in the sea image.

Rufst du nun den einen Namen verzweifelt
aus dem Dunkel—

Warte einen Augenblick noch—
und du wandelst auf dem Meer
Das Element durchdringt schon deine Poren
du wirst mit ihm gesenkt und gehoben
und bald im Sand wiedergefunden
und bei den Sternen anfliegender erwarteter Gast
und im Feuer des Wiedersehens verzehrt
still—still—¹⁸

The poem begins with a desperate call to the One, the incantation of the Name that should bring forth life and light. But the use of the word "desperate" (*verzweifelt*) already predisposes a sense of doubt about the outcome, a doubt reinforced by the abrupt break at the end of the second line that leaves both a visual and a semantic space in which the cry of the lyric persona echoes. The poem is structured to reflect a contiguity and continuity of form and message: the gap between the first and second stanzas concretizes the sense of emptiness and anxiety in the act of waiting for a response. The first line of the second stanza underscores this anticipatory attitude and the hopefulness that inspires the lyric persona to wait just a bit longer in a state of expectancy signalled by a dash into nothingness. The moment of anticipation passes and the "du," designating both the Other and the lyric persona in monologic dialogue, returns to an elemental state of union with the sea.

The absence of the Father is evidenced in the lack of response to the Name, without which the lyric persona cannot become an agent of language. At the end of the poem the lyric voice leaves the realm of language and is engulfed by the stillness of the cosmos. The final dash can be read as symbolic of the plunge into a reunion with inexpressible, maternal silence (Kristeva, *Tales* 311) or of a cathartic absolution preceding potential rebirth. This silence is the infinitude of the void, the threat of engulfment by the Cosmic Mother as well as the anticipation of union with nothingness. By confronting this danger, however, the lyric persona opens herself up to unknown possibilities. What here could be read as a silence on the verge of a rebirth of language, as Gisela Dischner understands the meaning of silence in Sachs's poetry (330), can also be seen as the threshold to a new, self-aware stage of being.¹⁹

The complexity and ambivalence inherent in the daughter-poet's relationship to maternal infinitude, caught between the desire for identification and the fear of dissolution, give rise to poems that seek to elude the power of the metaphysical, cosmic maternal force and appeal instead to more terrestrial and mortal maternal incarnations: the mother tongue and the mother land. Language for *Ausländer* became both a reminder of her perpetual exile and of her unstilled longing for the motherland. After the war and the destruction of the fatherland, the word was the only home left to her (5: 98):

Mein Vaterland ist tot
sie haben es begraben
im Feuer

Ich lebe
in meinem Mutterland
Wort²⁰

The love of the (lost) homeland is related or connected to the love of a (mother) tongue. In her comparative study of Ausländer and Sachs, Beil argues rather pragmatically that for the poet in exile, the mother language assumes a compensatory function, substituting for the home the poet has lost: the love of country is displaced onto a love of the language associated with that country (62). This substitution principle, however, is not as simple as Beil makes it appear, and becomes especially blurred and confused in Ausländer's peripatetic biography culminating in her return to Germany. Ausländer's decision to settle in Germany in 1965 has been touted as a literal return to the German language.²¹ It is important to distinguish, however, that language in this instance is no longer an abstract surrogate homeland, but has become conflated with a geographical place, and that by this act of re-location, the poet hopes to overcome the disjunction of language and home. The displacement moves between the literary and the literal, where the physical context takes on a level of meaning for the poet that cannot be isolated into the realm of the referent (and the word). Therefore Ausländer's retreat into language, although apparent, cannot be viewed as absolute. The discursive space was not enough: she required a locus, a place of association that reinforced her sense of being in the wor(l)d.

In contrast to Ausländer's increasing retreat into language as the last refuge of hope and outlet for subjective if sublimated agency, Sachs's relationship to language was characterized by repeated ruptures, questions, and fundamental doubts about its expressive possibilities. This was especially true of her poetological self-understanding in the years immediately following the Nazi genocide and the traumatizing knowledge that accompanied it. In a 1947 letter to Hugo Bergmann, she despaired that language, worn thin and meaningless with use, abuse, and time, could ever be adequate to the task of representing experience: "Es reicht ja doch kein Wort zu nichts mehr hin, von gestern zu morgen ist eine Kluft wie eine Wunde, die noch nicht heilen darf" (No word suffices for anything anymore; between yesterday and tomorrow there is a chasm that is like a wound, which still cannot heal, *Briefe* 85). For Sachs, the wound, the suffering, was inseparable from its articulation, an intertwining of experience and representation that she expressed vividly in reference to the physicality of her own relationship to poetic language: her metaphors, she stated, were her wounds (Fritsch-Vivié 99). Not only were representation and suffering indistinguishable for Sachs, but both connected back to the religious associations called forth by the Word. This mystical word, the Divine Word made flesh, as the articulation of the heterogeneous multiplicity of human experience and suffering could, however, only be approximated in the language available to the poet. For Sachs, language served both as a tool for probing and fathoming that

“other” realm she sensed beyond language and as a means of communicating her deepest fears, desires, hopes, and beliefs.

The loss of faith in a Divine Father and the ambivalent relationship to the maternal confound and disturb the sense of being in the world and in language. To bridge this gap between uncertainty and the desire for stability, for belief, images of the maternal presence counter and offset paternal absence. In *Ausländer's* poem “Der Dom” (*The Cathedral*, 2: 214), the cathedral serves as a metaphor for the paternal religious tradition that has lost credibility.

Ich habe einen Dom geerbt
 Ich kann nicht beten
 Ich stammle Blume Waldruh Wolkenstern
 ich stammle Mutter Meermund du und du

Meine Gebete sind mir nicht geglückt²²

The poetic “I” has inherited a tradition to which she ultimately lacks access because she does not have the language necessary to participate in it. The image of the cathedral itself represents a barrier between the self and the world, and the poetic subject feels cut off from nature, communication, and language. Her stammered “prayers” are not recognized by the divinity whose house of worship has ironically become her property. She bitterly notes the gap between her words and an absent God who does not or will not hear them. The self-contradictory nature of this admission, however, in which she claims on the one hand to be unable to pray and on the other insists that her prayers were unsuccessful, indicates the absorbing ambivalence of her relationship to God. It is a relationship shadowed with doubts and disappointments, yet one that the poetic “I” can never fully reject or abandon.²³ Significantly, her presence in the cathedral reflects her exploration of her paternal legacy in the house of God, but she has no connection to his language and instead can only speak in maternalistic associative fragments. In the Father’s house she speaks the (M)Other’s name, an Other with whom she shares a bond that is beyond or outside the language sanctioned by paternal law (“ich stammle Mutter Meermund du und du” [I stammer Mother ocean-mouth you and you]). This stuttering disruption of speech can be read as a conflict between symbolic (linguistic, conscious) and semiotic (prelinguistic, unconscious) processes, representing the poet’s oscillation between paternal and maternal allegiance at the level of language.²⁴

For Sachs, the striving to articulate the multiplicity and contradictions of experience in the anomie of the post-Holocaust world cannot be separated from her mystical self-understanding and her belief that the capacity to achieve such representation was somehow a demonstration of divine grace: “Wer leidet und wer liebt, muß sich überlassen können bis zum letzten Atemzug, den Staub zu durchseelen ist eine Mission—das

Wort zu finden—Gnade” (Whoever suffers and whoever loves must be able to abandon him/herself until the last breath, to inspire the dust is a mission—to find the word—grace, *Briefe* 173). This connection of suffering and grace, aspiration and language, is what Alvin Rosenfeld referred to as Sachs’s unique yet ultimately poetic construct of language as a surrogate home in an atmosphere of absence (364). Language for Sachs was inextricable from suffering, at once pierced with pain, implicated in violence, and steeped in faith it was never merely a medium of literary expression, but rather her spiritual connection to lived existence and future hopes.

Mysticism and doubt, belief and rejection, maternal metaphors and paternal images coexist in both Sachs’s and Ausländer’s struggles to mediate history, tradition, and experience. The maternal imago in Sachs’s and Ausländer’s writings serves as the stage upon which religion, history, and biography meet and enact the conflicts informing the struggle for identity and self-realization. In the constructed world of the poem, the lyrical self’s perceptions are mediated by the relationship to the maternal as divinity, cosmos, logos, homeland, mother, and originary other. As the German language came to represent the one remaining maternal connection for both poets, their acts of literary creation not only symbolized confrontations with their identity vis-à-vis the past, but also attempts to wrest some control over the configuration of that history through their own re-productions of memory. The play with figurations of the maternal as an approach to history and theology is not unproblematic²⁵ and could be read as a mere substitution of one reductive trope with one less reductive. A careful reading of Sachs’s and Ausländer’s figurations of the maternal, however, reveals their revisionary impetus as well as an underlying impulse to reconcile ethics with reality, memory with continuity, and subjective autonomy with community.²⁶ The daughter-as-poet appropriates the mother as figure and ground, absorbing the maternal qualities she both fears and admires in an embracing gesture of inclusion, seeking through poetry to discover and inhabit the space between self and other, subject and object, secular and spiritual.

Notes

All translations are my own, except where otherwise attributed.

¹ The point has often been made, especially in feminist criticism and theory, that the cult of mother goddess as earth goddess predates worship of a paternal god. See Kahn: “Female earth goddesses antedate male gods...and were associated with the organic cycle of life” (24) and Du Plessis (119).

² Ausländer's respect and awe for her father, who died in 1920, was also attested to by Helmut Braun, editor of Ausländer's collected works and a close friend to the poet during the last twelve years of her life, in a personal communication in August 1993.

³ "We orphans / We lament to the world: / Our branch has been cut down / And thrown in the fire— / Kindling was made of our protectors— / We orphans lie stretched out on the fields of loneliness. / ... / We orphans / We lament to the world: / Stones have become our playthings, / Stones have faces, father and mother faces / They wilt not like flowers, nor bite like beasts— / And burn not like tinder when tossed into the oven— / We orphans we lament the world: / World, why have you taken our soft mothers from us / And the fathers who say: My child, you are like me! / We orphans are like no one in this world any more! / O world / We accuse you!" (*Chimneys* 29–31).

⁴ "Our Father / take back your Name / we do not dare / to be children // How to say Our Father / with a choked voice // Lemonstar / nailed to one's forehead // The moon laughed maniacally / satellite of our dreams / the dead clown laughed / who promised us a leap // Our Father / we give you back / your Name / continue to play the Father / in childless / airless Heaven"

⁵ See Gershom Scholem's excellent and concise discussion of Talmudic treatments of the Shekhinah in *On the Kabbalah* (104 f.). Scholem further explains that the feminine quality of the Shekhinah is interpreted as akin to that of mother, wife, and daughter simultaneously (105).

⁶ Gisela Brinker-Gabler, in accordance with Kersten (178), makes this associative connection in her article on Sachs's poem "Bin in der Fremde" (37). This interpretation is contested in Anke Bennholdt-Thomsen and Alfredo Guzzoni (160), which Brinker-Gabler does not refer to in her analysis. Claudia Beil associates the figure of Melusine with Romanticism and argues that the use of this image in Sachs's poem is evidence of the degree to which Sachs was influenced by the Romantic tradition (226).

⁷ "Forever beyond the limits of the world / the banished soul Genoveva waits / with her child pain-realm / in the homesick-beam. // *Shekinah* you can also say, / the dust-crowned, / the one who weeps through Israel // and the holy animal-woman / with the seeing wounds in her head, / that do not heal / because of God-memory // In her rainbow-pupils / have all hunters lit / the yellow pyres of fear // My foot also / here on the street / stubs against the ash-horizon— / a grenade splinter, / night-housed question mark, / lies in the forward direction. // Out of the warrior-pyramid, / lightning-robed, / shoots defenseless longing / Love / in the last swansong—"

⁸ "She searches she searches / ignites the air with pain / the walls of the desert know of love / which climbs new into the evening / the pre-celebration of death— // She seeks her beloved / does not find him / must re-create the world / calls on the angel / to cut a rib from her body / blows on it with divine breath / white palm leaf in sleep / and the veins drawn dreaming / The seeker in her

poverty / takes the crumb of earth in her mouth as farewell / her resurrection continues—" (*Seeker* 3-5).

⁹ Bloom uses this term to designate fear of a godless world, a condition of spiritual anxiety inspired by the anchorless state of exile (83).

¹⁰ "Where she stands / is the end of the world / the unknown enters where a wound is / but dreams and visions / madness and the script of lightnings / these fugitives from somewhere else / wait until dying is born / then they speak—" (*Seeker* 9).

¹¹ "What quarter of the sky have you taken up / to the north the gravestone is green / does the future grow there / your body is a plea in outer space: come / the source seeks its humid fatherland // bent without direction is the victim—" (*Seeker* 9).

¹² "Was not the ocean the wave-terraced our Mother / with breasts full of salty milk / Was not the fish the silver-serrated our Brother / fraternally sympathetic in silence / Did we not live eons in the cool fire of the waves / Were not the beaming stars inclined to us // They do not deny it, their silence speaks / we are not the first not the last progeny / we are ancient-round mussels in which the Mother still dreams / still sighs still sings the lullaby / still weeps the pearls her tears // See the pupils the pearls in the sparkle of our glance / the world is mother o' pearl-round in it the starry earth / green is the fundament of the ocean like the Eden of Earth / like the astonished forest in the lake of the eye"

¹³ "I do not know how it came to pass / that everything that I see and hear / is transformed into ocean / the stranger the neighbor the friend / waves / the city / howling surf / words / movement glitter and foam // I / an inexact form made of drops / your authentic daughter / ocean / compressed / and then drawn back / into your watery realm / fluid dust // We breathe you in / you breathe us out / me and my quicksilver-sisters / the fishes / our forest of / coral sea-moss sirens / has many functions / known to divers"

¹⁴ "On the back of the dolphin / you ride at night / through star-steppes / your succulent flesh / massaged by sharks and whales / the holy monster Leviathan / guards over your soul // I am not allowed to accompany you / only my nerves follow you / but that also is a transgression / and I suffer the punishment / of stones shards martyred mussels / I slake my thirst with salt / slime and the vicissitudes of the weather"

¹⁵ "On a reef / beneath Ravello / I would like to experience your last impact / your cool kiss without contour / a pearl grows in my flesh / a hard tear / you grow in me ocean / you grow in me / fluid and hard"

¹⁶ "Forgive me my sisters / I have taken your silence into my heart / There it resides and suffers the pearls of your suffering / ... / A lioness rides on Oceana's waves / a lioness of agonies / who long ago bequeathed her tears to the sea—"

¹⁷ "My ocean / remains true to me / in its mirrors / I find myself again / multiplied // It sings me / to restfulness to restlessness / dissolved / in endless rhythms / it sings / my watery body / into the sand"

¹⁸ "If now you desperately call the one name / out of the darkness— // Wait a moment longer— / and you walk upon the sea / Already the element transfuses your pores / you are lowered with it and lifted / and found again soon in the sand / and on the stars an awaited guest arriving by air / and consumed in the fire of reunion / be still—be still—" (*Chimneys* 249–51).

¹⁹ Cf. Karen Elias-Button: "By confronting the Terrible Mother in order to move beyond the entanglements of the mother/daughter relationship, and by claiming her as metaphor for the sources of our own creative powers, women are creating new self-configurations in which the mother is no longer the necessary comfort but the seed of a new being..." (205).

²⁰ "My Fatherland is dead / they have buried it / in fire // I live / in my Motherland / word"

²¹ This is the view presented by Helmut Braun and one found in several secondary studies, cf. Kessner and Beil.

²² "I have inherited a cathedral / I cannot pray / I stammer blossom forest-peace cloud-star / I stammer Mother ocean-mouth you and you // My prayers were not successful"

²³ Judith Butler discusses the temporary rebellion inherent in poetic language, a resistance to paternal law that ultimately submits to it: "poetic language and the pleasures of maternity constitute local displacements of the paternal law, temporary subversions which finally submit to that against which they initially rebel" (88).

²⁴ I am taking the terms symbolic and semiotic here in all their associative plurality from Julia Kristeva's distinctive brand of psychoanalytic semiotics in *Revolution of Poetic Language* and *Desire in Language*. In *Desire in Language*, Kristeva contrasts the situation of the subject within symbolic language, who has repressed the desire for the maternal semiotic with the more unsettled and dangerous situation of the "questionable subject of poetic language" who "maintains itself at the cost of reactivating this repressed, maternal element" (136).

²⁵ The images of the maternal in the poems discussed here can also be read as efforts to take back the mother from the ideological iconography of Nazism, which appropriated the maternal as a means of manipulating and realizing an ideal of racial hegemony. For a thorough discussion of the cultification of motherhood under Nazism, see Weyrather.

²⁶ Alicia Ostriker offers the thesis that women poets' revisionist approaches to religious belief fall into three categories that all share a common goal of comprehension: a hermeneutics of suspicion, a hermeneutics of desire, and a hermeneutics of undecidability (57 ff., 66). These levels are also relevant to the shifting revisionary processes that I see at work in Sachs's and Ausländer's poetic explorations of the intersections of faith, doubt, and desire.

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