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Nelly Sachs: longing and metamorphosis

My own things that want to devote themselves entirely to the secret of Israel¹

In *Chorus of the Rescued*, poet Nelly Sachs addresses those of her contemporaries who did not pass through the abyss of the Shoah and who so often disregard the pain of survivors. She begs these people to be gentle in teaching the rescued “to live again”, to help by showing them the sun “gradually” and by leading them step by step “from star to star”. She implores the world not to show them “an angry dog” yet, or else they may immediately fall back into the dust where their star was violently buried such a short time before. But she also adds that the rescued are only held together – and bound to those addressed in the poem – by mutual “leave-taking in the dust” that was required when their soul “fled to him” long before their bodies were saved.² No-one can advise them to forget or to turn the page, because it is through the memory of this farewell, and only through it, that the rescued may rejoin the living and share their time a little.

Nelly Sachs is well aware that “the black answer of hate” to the existence of Israel (CP 211) has not disappeared despite the tears and the ashes; she knows, too, that the “sleeping” people of the world (CP 273) remain indifferent to this hate even if they are not complicit with it. Despite everything, she tries to speak to them, using the very language perverted by the executioners in order to show a glimpse of the disaster’s immensity. She does so not to blame them, but to link the catastrophe to the secret of Israel that hate worked so hard to destroy. And yet because this catastrophe began – and always begins – with the depravation of language, with the desire to brutalize language and cut up sound with “the knife of hatred”, the poet’s intention is to teach the “peoples of the earth” how to leave “the words at their source, for it is they that can nudge the horizons into the true heaven” (CP 321f.). From poem to poem, she shows that this source and the secret of Israel remain inseparable.

The poems of Nelly Sachs speak of a world’s ruin; they descend as close as possible to the *tohu bohu* celebrated by murderous insanity and

by the sovereignty of senselessness. They even come dangerously close to the *tohu bohu* that, in the Bible, comes before language and the clear distinctions that appear in place of darkness and confusion. “O that no one mean death when he says life” (CP 321), pleads the poet. But her poems also resist chaos because their language prefers compassion to the greedy hate of revenge. The suffering that haunts them at the same time stops them from seeking consolation – who has the right to offer it? Who could receive it? With an intense longing, however, they try to drink from “the source” so that it can allow them to explore new paths for language, intelligence and sensitivity – in a word, for a human life. They discover, similarly to Hasidic mysticism, how to raise the suffering of the survivors, a suffering that is inseparable from the “burden of the soul cast off by the dead”,³ to a level that transforms it without consolation.

A world's ruin

Nelly Sachs observes with horror that the sun and moon impassively continue in their paths across the sky and that the earth remains firm beneath the feet of the living while “the little children were thrown like butterflies, wings beating into the flames” (CP 325). In this cosmic indifference and the earth's blindness (CP 125), she first sees proof that the world has reached a time that will forever remain without redemption. Indeed, nothing appears to alter the course of events: neither the unprecedented brutality of the murderous acts that insatiably prevented children from growing up and their parents from watching over them, nor the hateful perversion that brought forth “the salt of despair” from “the old men's parched eyes” (CP 33), nor the intelligence put to work to construct the “habitations of death” by which “Israel's body drifted as smoke” through the air (CP 21). Paradoxically, the world's ruin holds on to the imperturbable continuity of cosmic and natural life – but also human life – because it is beyond the grasp of unfathomable horror, for those who forever sullied the name of mankind usually feel no regret, and those who come afterwards demand the right to live and “not remember” (CP 219).

The poems of course do not resign themselves to this fact; they attempt to discover whether there is still “an heir to the succession of them that trembled” (CP 219) in the great petrification of hearts and souls. And to do this, they do not hesitate to address the executioner himself, asking why all that he “held in (his) hands was death” (CP 45) when he strangled his

victims, and dare to question Cain as to the meaning of his act when he carried “the green of earth to the rubbish heap” to remain “brother – without brother”.⁴

But the poet is not answered, and this is partly why the fear of persecution remained with her until the end of her life. She was well aware that we must first struggle with ourselves to glimpse a little clarity when anguish is overwhelming. This is precisely what she tells Paul Celan: “I, too, must walk this inner path that leads from ‘Here’ towards the untold sufferings of my people, and gropes onwards out of the pain.”⁵

However, as she says in poem after poem, this way out is never tranquility finally regained after a long ordeal, a tranquility that she describes as a “dead oasis-word” (S 319). The way out or exit from imprisonment in ruins is essentially the possibility, in this suffocating world, of listening to the creative word that we can still hear from ourselves and the little humanity that remains in the world. However, when the calamity has been so extreme and has broken all trust, this word must first make itself heard from our world so that it can be discerned from us, the reader. This at least is what Nelly Sachs suggests in a letter to her German friend Gudrun Harlan who, in 1939, visited Selma Lagerlöf in Sweden to make arrangements for the poet’s escape to that country with her mother in 1940 – at the eleventh hour. Sachs writes to her: “all that remained, all that was brought safely through the horror, is faith in the Eternal, the Divine, the Indestructible in you good people”.⁶

The small token of human goodness causes the feeling of faith in the Eternal to flare up in the soul of the persecuted. The Eternal should certainly not be interpreted as the “clamorous God”⁷ that mankind loves to involve so much in their bloody conflicts. For Nelly Sachs, the Eternal is hidden in this goodness and in our desire to sanctify life in its most prosaic materiality. He bears no resemblance to the Almighty who, as some believers still argue in vain, is supposed to stay the hands of murderers and punish the wicked. This is never the case: the world is in ruins, the descendants of the ancients have been consumed and the overflowing terror borne by the survivors is in danger of making them mute and suffocating them at any moment. The fantasy of Omnipotence is well and truly monopolized by men who are prepared to extinguish any light that could rival them and drunk on competing with God, or more precisely with the illusion that they have of Him. But the Eternal has given up such fights; moreover they have never been his except in the most rudimentary interpretations of holy

texts. He did not save Abel; according to the teachings of Isaiah (45:15) and the Hasidim dear to Nelly Sachs, He has hidden Himself. Without this the world could not exist; it would be destroyed at once by His brilliance (Kabbalistic theme of *tzimtzum*). However, hidden in powerlessness and distress at the disaster that has come to pass and all of the blood-soaked lights buried under a mound of ashes, suffering numbs Him with longing. Like Jacob, “battered and twisted” when he wrestled with the angel, “nobody returns to their God unscathed” (FS 213), says Nelly Sachs.

But what does it mean to return to Him? For the poet, it is to return to the ancient source from which all words spring up, to the eternal beginning that the peoples of the earth are particularly determined to avoid hearing when they refuse to allow their words to drink from it.

The eternal beginning

It is because they are ignorant of this eternal beginning, that of the creative Word which still resounds in the world even now (at least for those who listen amid the noise) and because they have allowed their words to be corrupted by darkness, that so many individuals and peoples hate Israel. The Jewish people, who were given the task of remaining faithful to this beginning – which Nelly Sachs also calls “the first sea” or “the source of the living God”⁸ – and to remember it despite contempt, fear and suffering, are thus marked by it, often unwillingly. This is the poet’s profound theory of anti-Semitism. It is the unbreakable bond between Israel and this beginning that the enemies of the Jews, whether they know it or not, desperately try to destroy if they are unable to seize it for themselves. They do so out of jealousy, hatred and the desire to turn their back on this beginning in their thoughts, words and lives. By contrast, Nelly Sachs feels an intense longing – a leitmotif in her poems – for this beginning and for the clarity that it brings each person’s view of creation. She foresees that this longing is vital to help soothe some of the still open wounds caused by a language that is cruel and terrified at having lost its way in attempting to replace the source. Only longing “builds bridges from star to star” (CP 165) in the ruins that remain, haunting in their harshness.

“But where are the words / illuminated by the first sea / eye-opening”⁹. The poet very quickly turns to “light-bearer sages”, as she so wonderfully calls them, to answer this crucial question. She intuits that, in a history

governed by violence, they at least are still keeping watch over this beginning, sea or source, depending on the various terms used. “On the day of destruction”, they press their ear to the ground, enabling them to hear “how in death life begins” (CP 55). These “light-bearers” are the “thirty-six bent into the work of suffering” (SG 141) who, according to the mystical tradition, allow the world to continue to exist by their mere presence hidden from all eyes, including their own. But they are also the prophets of Israel and the Kabbalist and Hasidic mystics, gratefully discovered by the poet, who carry this light within the words that they convey, at least to those who know how to offer them the asylum of their own interiority.

Nelly Sachs is one of them. She tells Hugo Bergmann, after he sent her a lecture on Martin Buber: “this is so close to me, so close, and it seems to me not only the most truthful, but in fact the only path that can be taken by a deepened Jewishness that restores sanctity to everyday life and all of humanity”. She adds that she has tried to make her Swedish poet friends understand Buber’s thinking, and that she lent them his collection of Hasidic tales. And yet, far from confining themselves to the conceptual and theoretical rigor promoted by philosophers, or even to a knowledge that is concerned with mastery, these do not separate thought from imagination and sensitivity. Nelly Sachs explains: “I believe that the non-bound, the fluid, the ever-possible is the only thing that could bring consolation after terrible experiences.”¹⁰ When they are inspired by a longing for the source – as is the case with Hasidic texts, which express an anxious and affectionate tension towards the great secret that is part of human interiority – words generally do not claim to be concepts. However, in the possibilities of meaning of which they allow a glimpse but never establish, they manage to provide a little consolation. Perhaps it is because in this way they furtively reach “the innermost point” (*nekudah penimit*), to use the words of the Hasidic rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger¹¹, the “point” from which springs longing for Him who spoke and things came into being. A concept rarely has this ability, but an image, a metaphor or a rousing description of thought that has not relinquished sensitivity may do so – particularly, of course, when they are filled with an insatiable longing for the source, and when they are riddled with a suffering that is eager to find asylum, however precarious, in words.

According to Nelly Sachs, Jewish artists must therefore listen to “the voice of their blood in order to awaken the ancient source to new life”.¹² If they

do not, this source will remain out of reach, and language deceived by a covert exile will not bring any clarity in the terrible despair that prevails in a world ravaged by hatred. However, without any dogmatism and ignoring the institutions that still attempt to govern language while claiming to be governed by it, poems allow this ancient source to well up once again and provide a little water to broken lives. Like the psalms of days gone by, these poems become a prayer “between earth and sky” (SP 285), they show their author’s belief in the invisible universe in which each person marks out their dark accomplishment¹³ in this world.

And yet what is accomplished by Nelly Sachs, who feels it is prohibited or impossible to “sell our ears” (CP 55), is to uncover the sparks of light buried in the dust. She feels an inconsolable longing for the dust of her beloved, but also for the dust of all the children and elders, mothers and fathers who vanished in the smoke. She evokes the solitary sage whose “room became acquainted with eternity”¹⁴ or the dancer whose “feet knew little of the earth” (WT 48), who also disappeared forever. They are said to have left no trace, and this pain is unbearable.

But the “foam of longing” (SP 101) does not allow resignation to this harsh fact. The waves return time and time again to take the pulse of the poet’s pain (S 243) so that, fated to descend into the labyrinth that despair continues to hollow out within her, she discovers a few hidden sparks of light there in its most secret recesses. Although these sparks reside in words, they can never be discovered by theoretical intelligence or the desire to shine; they make their way into the poems only via an “inner path”, through “birth-pangs”.¹⁵ Thus the poems emerge from deep within, a place that is wounded but alive and still illuminated by the eternal beginning that hatred seeks to eradicate in order to better celebrate the triumph of *tohu bohu* and darkness over the creative word. This hatred starts by completely drying it up in the human heart before torturing those who carry the memory of it through the ages. “One must not permit oneself / to suffer so / said the seer of Lublin” (S 391); we cannot allow ourselves to do so unless the hidden God, the God who appears to leave the world on the road to ruin, is with mankind in their distress (Isaiah 63:9). Nelly Sachs knows this with all her being. The hidden God gives her the strength to go through her solitary life haunted by the memory of persecutions and the disaster because she remains attentive to His weak voice in the very depths of her interiority. Despite her moments of distress, which became more marked over time, He gives her the strength to incorporate into her poems the “dreams [that

have] become orphans” of the departed, which constantly beg at her door. “I am uneasy / very afraid / to grasp the treasure with my small life”,¹⁶ she writes in one of her last poems. The words of these poems carry the wails, screams and then silence of all those who disappeared; they refuse to close the door on them, knowing that this is desired by many of her contemporaries who would prefer to exist without feeling offended by such a memory.

However, the poems of Nelly Sachs transform despair: they force us to listen to its call wherever we are, not to lose ourselves or wallow in it but instead to countersign the author’s desire to defeat it. The longing that drives her poetry does battle against the insidious triumph of evil in everyone, whether it takes the form of despair or hatred. And yet this is only possible because the longing is ultimately not only for a past when so many murdered innocents were still breathing, but also for the “eternal beginning” when the Voice of Creation called forth light and decreed that the creation was good. And yet this Voice has not completely disappeared and the goodness remains, even if it is masked by evil’s influence over souls. It is this Voice, or this gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12) hidden in the very depths of a person, that gives and restores to some a preference to “choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19) – in other words, to fight against the “tailed harvests of grief” (CP 309), in ourselves and around ourselves, to refuse their ever tempting spread in order to bring forth a few rays of this original light. The poems of Nelly Sachs are an exemplary testimony to this.

However, as we will see, they also reveal in the cosmos and nature something other than the impassivity and indifference mentioned at the start of this essay.

Metamorphosis

In a postscript to her dramatic poem *Eli: A Mystery Play of the Sufferings of Israel*, written in 1943, Nelly Sachs explains that it was “always designed to raise the unutterable to a transcendental level, so as to make it bearable and in this night of nights to give a hint of the holy darkness in which quiver and arrow are hidden”.¹⁷ Not long afterwards, she writes that her poems “try, albeit with limited strength, to raise the terrible to the realm of transfiguration, which has always been and will continue to

be the task of all poetry in all eras, from Greek genealogical sagas to the present day".¹⁸ Indeed, her poems endeavor to express the unspeakable and to "permeate our calamitous time with light and pain". They strive to "suffuse the dust with spirit and light". This is what Nelly Sachs calls her "faith" and "mission", knowing that to find the right word to accomplish it is "grace".¹⁹

Returning to a very persistent Hasidic theme, the poet maintains that each person has a "mission", that of saving the part of the universe that is entrusted to them: "We are all here on earth to affect our small portion of matter so that one day it becomes spirit. Whether we do so by writing or other endeavors is unimportant. What matters is that we try as best we can."²⁰ Nelly Sachs' "mission" is to raise to the light the share of unprecedented suffering that befell those who disappeared in the dust and ashes. It is to transform it into light by the grace of poetic words.

She does not wish to speak for those who disappeared, but to touch her readers by the power of her images and language so that they can internalize this suffering, instead of being content to know that it existed and then forgotten, as is almost always the case. Not only must this invisible suffering become readable, then, but readers must also show love for the grief spoken of page after page by Nelly Sachs.²¹

But how can we "recover the word" after the deluge that beat down on a people or person beset by anguish, wonders Nelly Sachs?²² How do you make it possible for this word to transform the dust? And what precisely does such an immoderate ambition mean?

The poet's contemplation of Jewish mystical texts offers the prospect of an answer to these questions. She tells a friend: "I read a lot in the Zohar, the Book of Splendor! And in the Hasidim. The first is full of cosmic possibilities, the second of an everyday animated by the spiritual."²³ The Zohar introduces her to a vision of the letters of the alphabet as tools of creation, and it leads her to connect, in her way, letters and the stars: "then wrote the scribe of The Zohar / opening the words' mesh of veins / instilling blood from stars / which circled, invisible, and ignited / only by yearning" (SP 123). She speaks of the "alphabet's corpse" (SP 123) which, as a chrysalis enveloping birth and death, is called upon to transform itself. But this requires the poet to closely scrutinize the "alphabet's corpse" and bring forth its hidden splendor, because she is filled with an imperishable longing. Are the letters of the alphabet not her "daily manna" (TD 62)? A

manna that as in the desert, can never be hoarded for the next day because it consists of words to be gratefully received each day. However, these words come from the most secret place within and are not received without the often poignant anxiety of this longing which is wholly oriented towards the enigma of the great beginning that could, perhaps, light up the current night. When words come to water sorrow, do they not pass over the sufferer a breath that illuminates and soothes it, albeit fleetingly? It is also a breath that, at the heart of creation and sometimes in ourselves, frees a part of life that has remained in limbo due to unbearable suffering.

Nelly Sachs tries to reach the invisible universe by poetry;²⁴ it is here that she wishes to write the martyred fates of those who disappeared in the dust, whether close or distant, brothers and sisters, known or unknown. The Hasidim strives to carry out the most basic daily tasks (eating, drinking, rejoicing in the beauty of God's creatures) by introducing them, by grace and duty of a spoken blessing, to a spiritual level that frees the sparks of light still imprisoned in the matter. The poet wishes to carry out the same task for the dust where the departed are buried, indistinguishable from one other to those who feel no longing. She wishes to lift some of this terrible anonymity by giving a voice to all the choruses after midnight. To be sure that she does not miss it, she searches for the tiny moment when "sleeping ashes reform themselves into star shapes" (WT 59).

The cosmos and nature thus fleetingly reveal to her not their indifference to the fate of the wretched, but their sorrow and revulsion at having been witnesses to the horror. They reveal to her how they welcomed all these torture victims when the human world annihilated them. Is it not true that the eyes of the dead, choked with terror before the approaching act of murder, have become watching angel eyes (CP 109), and that the clouds sometimes bear the faces of the dead (CP 131)? Nelly Sachs seeks the lost light of the departed in stones that have faces, father and mother faces, in the plucked violet, in the "twisted martyr-like branches of old oaks"; or even "in the night cry of the turtledove" and the "plumed heirs of a dead people" that show broken hearts the way (CP 57, CP 111, S 19). This vision where materiality, cosmos and nature come alive transforms pain without consolation. It sharpens perception to allow it a glimpse of brilliance belonging to what ordinarily remains invisible: a level of the world that is witness to human sufferings and, in its great silence, receives them with compassion.²⁵ However, to put this invisible level into words, to

make it readable, also requires empathy with the suffering that it has taken in and transformed. This empathy does not leave the poet untouched.

Despite his admiration and friendship, Paul Celan felt that she indulged in a “hubris of pain”²⁶. However, this pain, which ultimately plagued Nelly Sachs to the extent that she lost her freedom of judgment, believing herself to be subject to constant persecution by the Nazis in the final years of her life, does not dry up her poetic writing: it forces her to make room for silence itself in her poems. From this point, Nelly Sachs must seek metamorphosis in the silence “imbued with so many wounds” (TD 11), in the silence “behind the walls of words” (TD 14), “in the sweat of silence” (TD 15). How can we not believe, then, that death alone – and not metamorphosis – has won?

However, it was when death and its terrible silence closely surrounded her, says the poet, that words dictated themselves to her with an unprecedented strength. The poems violently forced open the door of this silence. She no longer speaks of grace in this respect; on the contrary, she says that the feeling of this intrusion was so intolerable that it pushed her to the edge of life.²⁷ On several occasions in these beautiful final poems snatched from the darkness of illness, the words “resurrection” (TD 23) or even “revived” (TD 27) take the place of those that previously evoked a metamorphosis.

These often enigmatic poems of her final years do not necessarily advocate a theological cause. The words come “running together apparently without logic, translating the abolition of time and passage towards the light that sees”,²⁸ i.e. towards the original and eternal light that, according to Jewish tradition at any rate, God has set aside for the righteous in the world to come. This light sees, and by seeing it gives life. In their way, it is by seeing things and beings – rather than speaking of them – that the words of the poems give them life and that resurrection gains meaning. This raises (the sense of the word *téhia*, resurrection in Hebrew) what lies in death, darkness and silence to draw it towards life. This life may only last for the moment of the poem, but hearing music play “in the resurrection ashes” (FS 384) is certainly enough for the supplicant to sense that “the shudder” (TD 39) with which they go through existence is not the ultimate reality.

Notes

- 1 Nelly SACHS (1891–1970), *Briefe* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 47. Letter to Manfred George and Mary Graf on 27 January 1946.
- 2 Nelly SACHS, *Collected Poems (1944–1949)*, trans. Michael Hamburger, Ruth & Matthew Mead and Michael Roloff (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 2011), 101–2. Hereafter CP followed by page number.
- 3 Nelly SACHS, *Fahrt ins Staublose* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1961), 169. Hereafter FS followed by page number.
- 4 Nelly SACHS, *The Seeker, and other poems*, trans. Ruth & Matthew Mead and Michael Hamburger (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), 173. Hereafter S followed by page number.
- 5 Nelly SACHS and Paul CELAN, *Correspondence*, trans. Christopher Clark (Riverdale-on-Hudson: Sheep Meadow Press, 1995), 3. First letter, undated.
- 6 Nelly SACHS, *Briefe*, op.cit., 53. Letter to Gudrun Dähnert, née Harlan, on 18 May 1946.
- 7 Nelly SACHS, *Späte Gedichte* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1965), 58. Hereafter SG followed by page number.
- 8 See Nelly SACHS, *Selected Poems*; including the verse play ‘Eli’, trans. Michael Hamburger, Michael Roloff, Christopher Holme, Ruth & Matthew Mead (London: Cape, 1968) 279 and 342 (hereafter SP followed by page number) and *Collected Poems*, op.cit., 229.
- 9 Nelly SACHS, *Suche nach Lebenden* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 52. Hereafter SL followed by page number.
- 10 Nelly SACHS, *Briefe*, op.cit., 87. Letter to Hugo Bergmann on 18 December 1947.
- 11 See GERRER REBBE (1847–1905), *The Language of Truth*, trans. Arthur Green (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998).
- 12 Nelly SACHS, *Briefe*, op.cit., 46. Letter to Manfred George and Mary Graf on 27 January 1946.
- 13 See letter to Paul Celan on 9 January 1958, in *Correspondence*, op.cit., 6. This theme is very prominent in the Jewish mystical tradition.
- 14 Nelly SACHS, *In den Wohnungen des Todes* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1947), 48. Hereafter WT followed by page number.
- 15 Letter to Paul Celan on 9 January 1958, in *Correspondence*, op.cit., 6.
- 16 Nelly SACHS, *Teile Dich, Nacht* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 67. Hereafter TD followed by page number.
- 17 Nelly SACHS, *Selected Poems*, op.cit., 387.
- 18 Letter to Max Rychner on 20 July 1946, in *Briefe*, op.cit., 63.
- 19 Letter to Alfred Andersch on 26 June 1959, in *Briefe*, op.cit., 220. In this letter, Sachs says that Lawrence Durrell’s novel *Justine* enlightened her. Perhaps she is thinking of the passage (in edition by Faber and Faber, London, 1963, 14–15) in which Durrell argues that art allows us “not to evade destiny, as the ordinary people try to do, but to fulfill it in its true potential – the imagination”. See also 173, letter to Walter A. Berendsohn on 30 October 1957, and 209, letter to Johannes Edfelt on 24 March 1959.

- 20 Letter to Etschi Horowitz on 24 March 1960, *Briefe*, op.cit., 242.
- 21 See Aris FIORETOS, *Nelly Sachs: Flight and Metamorphosis*, trans. Thomas Traaneus (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 28: “Even if the damage could not be undone, the wound had to be made ‘readable’. This required a feeling for that which defied comprehension as well. (...) For Sachs, ultimately, only those who love would seem to be true readers.” Also 219: during her acceptance speech for the Three Countries Prize (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) that she was awarded in 1960, Nelly Sachs spoke of “the enormous task of making an invisible universe readable [...] for a divine eye”.
- 22 See letter to Gunnar Ekelöf on 10 February 1962, in *Briefe*, op.cit., 276.
- 23 Letter to Jacob Picard, 20 January 1952, quoted in Aris FIORETOS, *Nelly Sachs*, op.cit., 162.
- 24 Aris FIORETOS, *Nelly Sachs*, op.cit., 166.
- 25 Here, Nelly Sachs resembles the Romantic poets, in particular Novalis who, in his *Hymns to the Night*, evokes the “countless transformations” of nature and the night’s pity for and “consolation” of man. See translation by George MacDonald (London: Temple Lodge, 1992), 9, 11 and 16.
- 26 See Aris FIORETOS, *Nelly Sachs*, op.cit., 255.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 257 and 276.
- 28 Lionel RICHARD, preface to his translation of a collection of poems by Nelly Sachs entitled *Présence à la nuit* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 8 (author’s emphasis).