

Article

# The Distance between Zurich and Todtnauberg

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on two poems written by Paul Celan after first encounters he had with writers who held great significance for him. In 1960 Celan met fellow Jewish poet Nelly Sachs at the Stork Inn in Zurich, and afterwards recorded the event in the poem “Zürich, Zum Storchen”. Seven years later, Celan visited Martin Heidegger at his hut in the German mountains. Celan’s depiction of this encounter is found in the poem “Todtnauberg”. In this essay, I make a two-fold argument regarding the Zurich poem. First I claim that “Todtnauberg” is clearly crafted in light of the earlier Sachs text, a fact that has been overlooked by previous scholarship. As such, it is only in placing the two texts side by side that a complete understanding of “Todtnauberg” comes into view. Second I will indicate how the Zurich poem reflects key elements of an approach to the problem of evil that I term an “enestological theodicy.” Such a term needed to be coined, since this sort of theodicy does not fit in the more traditional narrative categories related to the problem of evil.

**Keywords:** Paul Celan; Nelly Sachs; Martin Heidegger; Todtnauberg; Zurich at the Stork; enestological theodicy

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## 1. Introduction

It takes less than two hours to drive from Todtnauberg, Germany across the border to Zurich, Switzerland. However, in the world of Paul Celan’s poetry, these two sites seem utterly remote from one another. Both locations appear in poems he wrote about first meetings he had with writers who were particularly significant to him. After exchanging letters for a number of years with his fellow Jewish poet Nelly Sachs, Celan met her for the first time in May 1960 when she came from Sweden to receive a literary award in Germany—her first return to that country since 1940 when she fled the Holocaust. Celan depicted their initial meeting at the Stork Inn in Zurich in his poem “Zürich, Zum Storchen.”

Celan’s life, like Sachs’, was shattered and haunted by the Holocaust, as he lost both of his parents in the Shoah, and he himself spent time in labor camps. As such, his first meeting with Martin Heidegger in July 1967 was very different than the interaction with Sachs. While both men had admired the work of the other from a distance, Celan approached their first encounter with an understandable ambiguity, given Heidegger’s links in the 1930s to National Socialism. Nevertheless Celan ventured to Heidegger’s mountain hut, and afterwards presented his version of the interaction in “Todtnauberg.”

This later poem has received extensive attention over the years, much more than “Zürich” has. This essay, however, will focus in particular on this less famous poem, in order to make a two-fold argument about it. First I will claim that “Todtnauberg” is clearly crafted in light of the earlier Sachs text, a fact that has been overlooked by previous scholarship. As such, it is only in placing the two texts side by side that a complete understanding of “Todtnauberg” comes into view. Second I will indicate how the Zurich poem reflects key elements of an approach to the problem of evil that I term an “enestological theodicy.” Such a term needed to be coined, since this sort of theodicy does not fit in the more traditional narrative categories related to the problem of evil.

I will go about this in four primary steps. The first three are based on comparing sections of the poems. Part one will consider parallels between the first two portions of each text. Part two will focus on the longest section of each text (in each case it is the third section). It is here that the connection between the two poems is clearest, as Celan uses similar wording to craft parallels between the respective responses of the Jewish God and Heidegger to the Holocaust. Part three will then turn to the remainder of the poems, which is where the texts diverge most clearly. Finally, part four will provide an explanation of key aspects of the enestological type of theodicy, especially notable in the “Zürich” poem.

## 2. On the Day of an Ascension

ZÜRICH, ZUM STORCHEN [Section 1 and Section 2]

Für Nelly Sachs

Vom Zuviel war die Rede, vom  
Zuwenig. Von Du  
und Aber-Du, von  
der Trübung durch Helles, von  
Jüdischem, von  
deinem Gott.

Da-

Von.

Am Tag einer Himmelfahrt, das  
Münster stand drüben, es kam  
mit einigem Gold übers Wasser.

[ZURICH, AT THE STORK

For Nelly Sachs

Our talk was of Too Much, of  
Too Little. Of Thou  
and Yet-Thou, of  
clouding through brightness, of  
Jewishness, of  
your God.

Of

that.

On the day of an ascension, the  
Minster stood over there, it came  
with some gold across the water.]<sup>1</sup>

TODTNAUBERG [Section 1 and Section 2]

Arnika, Augentrost, der  
Trunk aus dem Brunnen mit dem  
Sternwürfel drauf,

in der

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<sup>1</sup> All translations of Celan’s poetry in the text are by John Felstiner (Celan 2001, pp. 140–41, 314–15). Full versions of both poems, with Felstiner’s attendant translations, are provided as an Appendix A.

Hütte,

[TODTNAUBERG

Arnica, Eyebright, the  
drink from the well with the  
star die on top,

in the  
hut,]

Both of these poems are written about encounters occurring under the shadow of the Shoah, but the titles hint at the different directions these meetings eventually take. The “stork” reference in “Zürich” suggests more than the literal location where Celan and Sachs meet. It points to Celan’s sense of new life emerging from the encounter (the content of this new life will be explained in section four below). By contrast “Todtnauberg” suggests the opposite outcome. The “*Tod*” in Todtnauberg hints at an interaction that will ultimately result in a form of death, not in new existence. Further, the personal dedication to Nelly Sachs in the “Zürich” text stands in stark contrast to the indirect, impersonal reference to Heidegger in “Todtnauberg” as “*Denkenden*” (“The thinking one”).

The direction of these initial contrasts then seems to be undercut in the first section of each poem. “Todtnauberg” begins with a sense of hope, recovery, and serenity, as it describes the water found in the well outside Heidegger’s hut, as well as two flowers linked to healing: arnica, which soothes aches and bruises, and eyebright, which, per its German equivalent *Augentrost*, is thought to provide comfort to one’s eyes. However, this peaceful scene also emphasizes silence, at least in terms of the absence of human voice. By contrast, the human voice is immediately apparent in “Zürich”, with its early reference to talk (“*die Rede*”). The discussion seems more monotonous and exhausting than hopeful, as evidenced by the seven separate uses of “von” (“of”) in the first eight lines. Much is talked about, but the result is dissatisfying, either “too much” or “too little”. Whatever the problems are in the meeting with Sachs, silence is not one of them.

Despite the different beginnings, both poems are suffused with religious references. The beginning sections of both poems evoke the people of Israel. The reference is explicit in the Sachs poem with its mention of “*Judischem*”, but it is also implicit in “Todtnauberg” when Celan notes the star die or cube above the well outside Heidegger’s hut. In Celan’s poetry in general, references to stars bring to mind the Star of David, even if no specific reference to Israel is made.

Further, both sections deal with architecture of a religious or spiritual sort. In “Todtnauberg” the term used for Heidegger’s hut (“*Hütte*”) is also the word for tabernacle (as in another Celan poem, “*Hüttenfenster*”). The duality of this term fits the quasi-spiritual meaning with which Heidegger endowed the building. As Adam Sharr (Sharr 2006, p. 103) notes, Heidegger “responded to the hut and its mountains through a routine of almost monastic subsistence, affirming there his belief in a liturgy of being and delineating life by its passage in routine”. This was Heidegger’s church of nature, linking him to the “power of creation” apart from the mediation of any tradition (ibid., p. 65). In contrast to this nature temple, Celan meets with Sachs in the city, across the Limmat River from the Grossmünster Cathedral. Celan was not a Christian, nor a believing Jew, but both he and Sachs found a meaning in being able to see the shining gold of the church reflected in the water from where they sat at the Stork Inn across the river. Such Christian imagery is not unusual in Celan’s poetry since “Christian topoi are as important an imaginative resource for Celan as traditional Jewish ones, and often the two are simultaneously invoked” (Bernstein 2000, p. 106).

In this section of the “Zürich” poem, the most significant Christian reference is to the Day of Ascension, the day on which Celan and Sachs meet at the Stork. In the broad Christian narrative of history, three key higher times involve creation (protology), the life and actions of Jesus (Christology), and the end of time (eschatology). While these all clearly diverge in their focus and meaning, what they, as traditionally viewed, share is that the main action in each is initiated and carried out by the

divine. The Day of Ascension inaugurates a different era in this grand narrative, namely a period between the times where the focus is on human action, albeit action inspired by God. In the Ascension, the direct divine presence on earth departs, leaving humans in the ongoing present to act as witnesses to this higher presence. While protology, Christology, and eschatology are well-established terms for talking about this broad Christian view of history, there is no parallel word for this post-Ascension period of the ongoing present. As such, I have coined “enestological” to serve as the companion term for talking about this phase in the Christian narrative. This word is derived from the Greek ενιστημι, which means “to be at hand” or “to be present”. In this poem, Celan chooses to emphasize that he and Sachs meet on a day that highlights that humans have been left in the here and now, and the responsibility for the future is in our hands.

### 3. “Death-Rattled” Words

ZÜRICH, ZUM STORCHEN [Section 3]

Von deinem Gott war die Rede, ich sprach  
 gegen ihn, ich  
 liess das Herz, das ich hatte,  
 hoffen:  
 auf  
 sein höchstes, umröcheltes, sein  
 hadernes Wort—

[ZURICH, AT THE STORK

Our talk was of your God, I spoke  
 against him, I let the heart  
 I had  
 hope:  
 for  
 his highest, death-rattled, his  
 wrangling word—]

TODTNAUBERG [Section 3]

die in das Buch  
 —wesen Namen nahms auf  
 vor dem meinen?—  
 die in dies Buch  
 geschriebene Zeile von  
 einer Hoffnung, heute,  
 auf eines Denkenden  
 (un-  
 Gesäumt kommendes)  
 Wort  
 im Herzen,

[TODTNAUBERG

into the book  
 —whose name did it take in  
 before mine?—  
 the line written into

this book about  
 a hope, today,  
 for a thinker's  
 (un-  
 delayed coming)  
 word  
 in the heart,]

While the contrast in the two poems' titles shows one way in which Celan wrote "Todtnauberg" as a companion to "Zürich", it is the third (and longest) sections of each poem that provide the clearest evidence that the Heidegger poem was in part constructed using the model found in the earlier Sachs poem. In both poems the third section provides the key moment of transition, as it moves the text from the initial, introductory stage to its concluding point. In both cases, this is done by focusing on similar themes, with variations of three key terms (word, heart, and hope) proving central in each.

It is in these respective sections that the evil of the Holocaust emerges clearly. In "Zürich" Celan uses "*umröcheltes*" as one of the three modifiers he applies to the response he seeks from Sachs' God. "Death-rattled" suggests that any possible reply by the Jewish God would have to be impacted in a shattering way by the Shoah. In the third section of "Todtnauberg" by contrast the focus is not on those who suffered but on the perpetrators, or at least those who endorsed the ideology behind the horror that was inflicted on millions of people. While the previous section ends with reference to the seemingly serene "*Hütte*" out in nature, this portion of the poem begins inside the hut, where a more insidious side is revealed. As Celan signs Heidegger's guest book, he wonders about others who have visited before him, especially those who would have met with Heidegger when he was associated with National Socialism.

This past link to the Nazis is an overriding concern of Celan's during his visit to Todtnauberg. The words "word", "heart", and "hope" emerge at this point in the narrative, in reference to Celan's reaction to Heidegger's past. As Celan writes in the hut's guestbook he expresses his own hope for some words of acknowledgment, confession, and explanation from Heidegger . . . words that would either come from Heidegger's heart, to Celan's, or both ("*einer Hoffnung, heute, auf eines Denkenden [ . . . ] Wort im Herzen*").

Just as Celan hopes for an accounting from Heidegger for his actions and inactions during the time of the Nazis, so, too, does he seek a response from the God Sachs continues to believe in despite the horrors of the Holocaust. Celan takes on the role of a modern Job, challenging the Jewish God, and demanding an explanation for the atrocities carried out against God's chosen people. Celan protests against the unfathomable scale of the destruction to lives and hearts brought about by the Nazis. However, despite Celan's non-belief, he nevertheless admits he left his heart open to some revelatory response, a word from the beyond ("*ich liess das Herz, das ich hatte, hoffen: auf sein [ . . . ] Wort*").

As such, in both poems hope exists for receiving an explanation for silence in the face of the Holocaust. It should be noted, however, that while these poems are so tightly linked in these ways, a crucial difference is in place at the end of the third sections of "Zürich" and "Todtnauberg". While language makes its first appearance in the narrative of "Todtnauberg", it is only in writing done by Celan himself—no words have been spoken by either Celan or Heidegger. By contrast, the third section of "Zürich" again emphasizes the interaction and debate taking place between Sachs and Celan (as in the first line: "Our talk was of your God, I spoke [ . . . ]"). This central distinction between the poems is crucial to note, since it lays the groundwork for understanding the concluding sections of each work.

#### 4. We Really Don't Know What Counts

ZÜRICH, ZUM STORCHEN [concluding sections]

Dein Aug sah mir zu, sah hinweg,  
dein Mund  
sprach sich dem Aug zu, ich hörte:

Wir  
wissen ja nicht, weisst du,  
wir  
wissen ja nicht,  
was  
gilt.

[ZURICH, AT THE STORK

Your eye looked at me, looked away,  
your mouth  
spoke toward the eye, I heard:

We  
really don't know, you know,  
we  
really don't know  
what  
counts.]

TODTNAUBERG [concluding sections]

Waldwasen, uneingeebnet,  
Orchis und Orchis, einzeln,

Krudes, später, im Fahren,  
deutlich,

der uns fährt, der Mensch,  
der's mit anhört,

die halb-  
beschrifteten Knüppel-  
pfade im Hochmoor,

Feuchtes,  
viel.

[TODTNAUBERG

woodland turf, unleveled,  
Orchis and Orchis, singly,

crudeness, later, while driving,  
clearly,

the one driving us, the man  
who hears it too,

the half-  
trodden log-  
paths on high moorland,  
  
dampness,  
much.]

The division between these two sections can be narrowed down to two words, one from each text: the unified “we” of Sachs and Celan in the Zurich poem and the “singly” walking Celan and Heidegger in “Todtnauberg”. While the “Stork” in the title refers in part to the Inn at which Celan and Sachs meet, it also suggests new life and the birth of a connection that is evident in the solidarity exhibited at the end of that poem. Likewise, while Todtnauberg is the actual location for the Celan/Heidegger encounter, but the “*Tod*” (death) in the title also applies to the lack of renewal and unity that results from Celan’s pilgrimage to Heidegger’s hut. This section will focus on how these differing results come about in the poems.

In the concluding section of “Todtnauberg” the omission of the human voice is finally broken, albeit only in a single instance, in a solitary word. “*Krudes*” is the term used to describe the conversation that takes place between Heidegger and Celan as they ride together. While John Felstiner translates the term as “crudeness” (as above), a more accurate sense of the term in this context might be “blunt” or “raw”, older meanings discussed by James Lyon (Lyon 2006, p. 183).<sup>2</sup> In a letter to his wife about the Heidegger meeting Celan writes “in the car we had a very serious conversation in words that were unmistakable on my part” (ibid., p. 163). Celan does not mention Heidegger’s response, but his use of “unmistakable” suggests his own words were “raw” or “blunt” as he questioned Heidegger about his past. The poem, too, gives no indication of a response by Heidegger, and this fits with what Anne Carson (Carson 1999, p. 34) writes regarding this poem: “Heidegger had long been master of ‘the danger-free privilege of silence’”. This aloof response to Celan’s “raw” emotions and speech is underscored by Celan’s reference to the driver of the car (Gerhard Neumann), who actually “hears” (“*anhört*”) Celan’s words and the human cry and hope within them in a way that Heidegger does not. As such, Neumann is referred to as a full-fledged human being in the poem (“*der Mensch*”), while Heidegger is only described in his capacity as a thinker (“*Denkenden*”).

Likewise, hearing is central to the conclusion of “Zürich”. In this case, however, the one who hears is Celan himself, and what he hears from Sachs is an admission of shared perplexity when recalling the memory of extreme suffering (a contrast to the entrenched silence in the face of the same, as seen in “Todtnauberg”). Despite the trauma of the Holocaust, Sachs remained a believer, unlike Celan. Sachs, who was in Switzerland to receive the Droste Prize, said in her acceptance speech, “‘Everything counts’ in God’s eyes” (Felstiner 1995, p. 159). As such, she was broadly asserting knowledge of the divine plan and purpose, even after the horror that the Jews endured at the hands of the Nazis. However, in her meeting with Celan, she steps back from such assurance, and meets him halfway by acknowledging human finitude and doubt. Up until this concluding section, the poem has been one of opposition and separation: the “I” of Celan against Sachs’ “you”. The first mention of “We” therefore signals a change, as a point of solidarity is reached. Recalling the pivotal third section of the poem, when Celan expresses his hope for a reply from God about the Holocaust but receives none, this final section could indicate that Sachs’ words are a stand-in for that divine word. If nothing else, this serves as a fitting end to a poem rooted in the Day of Ascension. The divine may have been present, but in the ongoing moment between the times, the focus is on human agency and interaction. Here there is a moment of genuine human connection, one based on an expression of vulnerability and

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<sup>2</sup> While finding Lyon’s discussion of this term from the poem useful, I disagree with his general interpretation of the Celan/Heidegger encounter. He thinks Celan was relatively satisfied with their meeting, but for the reasons I am articulating in this essay, such a stance goes against the overall sense and feel of the text, especially when read in the context of the “Zürich” poem.

ignorance. Such is the new life signaled by the poem's title, which provides a stark contrast to the isolation and figurative death that suffuses Celan's "Todtnauberg". In Celan's poetry, it turns out, the distance between Zurich and Todtnauberg is an abyss.

### 5. A Particularly, But Not Uniquely, Modern Theodicy

Regarding the history of attempts to address the problem of evil, Marjorie Suchocki (Suchocki 1988, p. 1) writes that "religious thinkers have sought the reason and resolution of those sorrows at the edges of history—in protology and eschatology". This quote clearly covers a significant part of the history of theodicy, as many thinkers have sought to discern the "Why?" of the origins of evil, or tried to riddle out the transhistorical redemption of evil. Within the Christian tradition another method has been to view the suffering of the world through a Christological lens and to address the reality of evil via the person and work of Jesus. Whatever differences these three positions may have, they share two key things. First, they deal with the matters of suffering and injustice through turning to the grand narrative of a tradition (with that narrative ranging from creation to the end of time). Second, their focus is on what God has done or will do vis-à-vis evil, that is to say, the emphasis is on specific divine action regarding these horrors. While these three ways of approaching the theodicy question all have venerable histories, they do not exhaust all the primary narrative approaches to this topic.

As noted above, protology, Christology, and eschatology are all well-established terms for discussing major moments in particular faith narratives, but there is no comparable companion word to refer to the category of the ongoing present. This is significant because one of the major developments in the modern period is the growing agreement among some writers that God's action in the present is what must be stressed when discussing evil, rather than putting one's attention on the distant past (protology or Christology) or the remote, uncertain future (eschatology). It is for this reason that I have coined the term *enestological* to express this general position. The need for such a category is seen in the fact that a whole host of modern writers do not easily fit primarily either into the protological, Christological, or eschatological types of theodicy. Among these include a variety of feminist, womanist, black, and other liberation thinkers, as well as process theologians. Key elements typical of this *enestological* outlook, albeit in a highly condensed form, are evidenced in Celan's "Zürich" poem.<sup>3</sup>

Three related facets combine to make the text a reflection of such a present-oriented approach to the problem of evil. First, there is Celan's protest in the face of the enormity of the suffering and injustice wrought in the Holocaust. While, of course, unspeakable acts and horrors suffuse history, the modern period has brought with it even greater capacity for humans to enact such havoc and destruction on others. In turn, protests such as Celan expresses in this poem have grown in number and intensity. It is such awareness of the modern increase for the capacity to unleash evil that serves as a, if not the, impetus for the *enestological* outlook. One paradigmatic *enestological* writer, Emmanuel Levinas (Levinas 1998, p. 97), articulates this viewpoint when he states that "The disproportion between suffering and every [traditional] theodicy was shown at Auschwitz with a glaring, obvious clarity". As such, a new approach to evil and suffering needed to be developed.

In light of this, second, the poem expresses dissatisfaction with and a distance from explanations and justifications of the existence of evil. While Sachs may have some sense that for God "everything counts", she backs off this simple, blanket statement in light of the back and forth she has with Celan. If she did not do so, she would be saying both "Too Much" and far "Too Little" regarding the Holocaust, and, by extension, endless other moments of horror. The stance they share in the face of the enormity

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<sup>3</sup> Since Celan himself was not a believer, the claim here is not that he himself was consciously, deliberately articulating a theodicy or an approach to the problem of evil. Rather, the point is that his poem, suffused with religious concepts as it is, ends up expressing key elements of this sort of theodicy.

of human suffering is one of mutual ignorance regarding ultimate answers: “we really don’t know what counts”. Sarah Pinnock (Pinnock 2002, p. 125), another paradigmatic example of this type, speaks against the simple attempts to construct solutions so that we can feel the evils of existence have been resolved: “Evil must remain a surd, with no resolution, no atonement”.<sup>4</sup>

This leads, third, into what is expressed in the poem by the reference to the Day of Ascension. Humans find ourselves in the here and now, we regularly encounter new instances of evil around us, and the responsibility for addressing these lies in our hands. As such, as in the Zurich poem, humans can work in the present moment to alleviate suffering and bring solace to the hurting. In the enestological perspective, the divine is working through these deeds of humanity, but unlike with the protological, Christological, and eschatological stances, the primary action in this viewpoint is on the part of humans. A prime process representative of this type, David Griffin (Griffin 1991, p. 33), echoes this thought when he writes that “process theology agrees with the poem, ‘God has no hands but our hands’”.

While the enestological type of theodicy has emerged with a particular significance and force in the modern period, it found expression in earlier times as well. An example from the Jewish tradition is the prose conclusion to the Book of Job.<sup>5</sup> While Job 42:7–17 often is dismissed as providing a simplistic, Hollywood ending to a story of extreme suffering and loss, these verses actually contain a complex picture of the relation between divine and human action in the face of evil. While the text portrays God as being, somehow, the ultimate source behind the events of the narrative, the emphasis is on human actions and decisions in the present, and this is seen in three ways in this passage. First, through divine guidance, Job is led to pray on behalf of his three friends, despite the fact that they failed so miserably in their role as comforters to him in his time of need. Second, while God is credited in a general sense with restoring Job’s fortunes, the text highlights the fact that the direct means through which Job gets back on his feet is the gifts and assistance of family and friends. Finally, God is described as blessing Job’s later life, which includes the birth of ten new children. In this, however, the portrayal is not of a miraculous divine intervention that produces in an instant an entirely new family. Rather, what is shown is Job and his wife coming to a renewed appreciation of the gift of life, and this leads them to the desire to bring new offspring into the world. This embrace of creation and the wonders it contains comes in light of the divine revelation of the glories of existence in Chapters 38–41, and is evidenced in the conclusion by the references to nature in the names of Job’s new daughters, translated by Robert Alter (Alter 2010, p. 179) as Dove, Cinnamon, and Horn of Eyeshade. Throughout this concluding prose section of the Book of Job, human activity in the present moment is at the forefront, while divine guidance serves as the backdrop and impetus for that activity.

In sum, Wendy Farley (Farley 1990, p. 127) writes from an enestological perspective that “in the very heart of suffering and oppression” human “resistance to evil is possible; in this resistance divine compassion becomes incarnate”. Such incarnation comes about only through human action, and Celan’s “Zürich” poem presents a concrete example of such incarnated compassion in the face of loss and grief. If, however, the alternative model found in “Todtnauberg” is the path that humans instead choose to tread, then: the rest is silence.

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<sup>4</sup> It is to be noted that some enestologically-oriented writers take a different stance on this general point. Process theologians, for example, do attempt to provide an explanation for the existence and origin of evil, while nevertheless placing their ultimate stress on the need for humans to act against evil in the present moment.

<sup>5</sup> This is just one way of approaching the problem of evil within the Jewish tradition among many. Elliot Dorff points out others (Dorff 1999, pp. 116–20), including more protologically oriented free-will theodicies, as well as Jewish writers who stress the importance of an eschatological solution to evil based on belief in the afterlife.

## Appendix A. Full Versions of “Zurich” and “Todtnauberg”

### ZÜRICH, ZUM STORCHEN

Für Nelly Sachs  
Vom Zuviel war die Rede, vom  
Zuwenig. Von Du  
und Aber-Du, von  
der Trübung durch Helles, von  
Jüdischem, von  
deinem Gott.

Da-  
Von.

Am Tag einer Himmelfahrt, das  
Münster stand drüben, es kam  
mit einigem Gold übers Wasser.

Von deinem Gott war die Rede, ich sprach  
gegen ihn, ich  
liess das Herz, das ich hatte,  
hoffen:  
auf  
sein höchstes, umröcheltes, sein  
hadernes Wort—

Dein Aug sah mir zu, sah hinweg,  
dein Mund  
sprach sich dem Aug zu, ich hörte:

Wir  
wissen ja nicht, weisst du,  
wir  
wissen ja nicht,  
was  
gilt.

[ZURICH, AT THE STORK  
For Nelly Sachs

Our talk was of Too Much, of  
Too Little. Of Thou  
and Yet-Thou, of  
clouding through brightness, of  
Jewishness, of  
your God.

Of  
that.

On the day of an ascension, the  
Minster stood over there, it came  
with some gold across the water.

Our talk was of your God, I spoke

against him, I let the heart  
I had  
hope:  
for  
his highest, death-rattled, his  
wrangling word—

Your eye looked at me, looked away,  
your mouth  
spoke toward the eye, I heard:

We  
really don't know, you know,  
we  
really don't know  
what  
counts.]

#### TODTNAUBERG

Arnika, Augentrost, der  
Trunk aus dem Brunnen mit dem  
Sternwürfel drauf,  
in der  
Hütte,

die in das Buch  
—wesen Namen nahms auf  
vor dem meinen?—  
die in dies Buch  
geschriebene Zeile von  
einer Hoffnung, heute,  
auf eines Denkenden  
(un-  
Gesäumt kommendes)  
Wort  
im Herzen,

Waldwasen, uneingebnet,  
Orchis und Orchis, einzeln,

Krudes, später, im Fahren,  
deutlich,

der uns fährt, der Mensch,  
der mit's anhört,

die halb-  
beschrifteten Knüppel-  
pfade im Hochmoor,

Feuchtes,  
viel.

[TODTNAUBERG

Arnica, Eyebright, the  
drink from the well with the  
star die on top,

in the  
hut,

into the book  
—whose name did it take in  
before mine?—  
the line written into  
this book about  
a hope, today,  
for a thinker's  
(un-  
delayed coming)  
word  
in the heart,

woodland turf, unlevelled,  
Orchis and Orchis, singly,

crudeness, later, while driving,  
clearly,

the one driving us, the man  
who hears it too,

the half-  
trodden log-  
paths on high moorland,

dampness,  
much.]

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