



SIEBENQUELL

Thoughts of Spring

»Arise! Come away!«



SOURCE: ROSEMARIE MONNERJAHN 2011

»Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come.« (Song of Songs 2,10 - 12)

In every place where people live in zones that now the seasons of the year, spring is considered as the time in which life is happening: arising, blossoming, singing - once again there is a reason to move, to develop and to rejoice.

Yet, we should be careful: That which in nature develops and runs its course all on its own, does not do so in human life. This demands of us effort, strength and our own will. We can see, hear, and smell all the signs of life breaking out anew and still remain motionless, as if paralyzed. An old lady comes to mind. She sat in her living room at the window, with a view of the glowing, sun-drenched spring garden of her house, in which she had always gladly laboured. Yet she had no drive to get up. Her husband had died the previous year and no one could replace him. She seemed to have buried her lust for life and her mission in life with him. Indeed, there was no one

there who spoke to her like this: »Arise, my love, my fair one,...« No one could entice her anymore. The winter remained.

Every phase of life, every day, indeed, every hour, challenge us: »Arise! Come away! Go a little further!«

I think of the Jewish lyricist Rose Ausländer and her eventful life.

At least a dozen times in her life she changed her place of residence, forth and back between Europe and the USA. Born in 1901 in Czernowitz in what then Austria, she went to Vienna for her commercial training and had, on account of the war, to remain there until 1918. Her homeland has in the meantime become Romanian. Alongside her work she now studied philosophy and literature. After the death of her father, she emigrated at the age of 20 to the USA, first to Minneapolis, later to New York. At 22 she married Ignaz Ausländer, her friend from her homeland. Yet, already in 1926 - she was staying in Czernowitz – she separated from him and stayed there for the time being. Two years later she moved yet again to New York with There she published poems and cultural features in German-speaking newspapers. At the beginning of the thirties she returned again to Czernowitz where her mother still lived. In the following years Romania remained the center of her life so that in 1937 her American citizenship was disallowed. In 1939 she was still able to undertake lengthier trips. Yet in the summer of 1940 - the Soviet Union had occupied the city and she was caring for her gravely ill mother - she was arrested by the Soviet Secret Police as a suspected spy for the USA and was incarcerated for 4 months. Once she was free, she decided to work as a nurse. Yet, already in the following year the Romanians governed the country again, who were allied with Germany. In October 1941 she entered the ghetto of Czernowitz and survived the Nazi period in a secret hiding place.

In the twenties she had begun to write poems in the USA. After the war, after she was once again in New York, she would only write in English. However, her roots do not let her go. She travels to Europe, meets Paul Celan several times, moves at the age of 63 to Vienna and settles in Germany one year later. Her travels are not yet at an end. Yet another 12 months in the USA are among them. For the last 15 years of her life, she calls the Nelly-Sachs-House in Dusseldorf her home.

For many long years, Rose Ausländer was totally unknown to a broader public in Germany, despite positive reviews. Despite the intercession of famous friends, none of the well-respected publishing houses wanted to publish her poetry. Only much later, and with the aid of an engaged and well trusted publisher is she genuinely noticed by the public at large. Now her most productive time begins and many books appear in these years. After a femoral neck fracture, from which her body never recovers, she decides in 1977 to concentrate the rest of her strength on writing.

How strenuous it must have been to continuously set out anew! How much strength she would have needed in order to combat weariness, resignation or rejection! What a will to live she had within her!

Thus, in 1979 at the age of 78, and already bedridden for a year, she was able to write:

A SHORT WAY FURTHER

**We went
a short way further
in the time
that renounces us**

**trees, the old friends
recognize us,
the wind, too,
sometimes say yes
to our direction**

**We will not allow ourselves to be intimidated
by strict prohibitions
and owl calls**

**A gale
tosses us to the ground,
a hand of the sun
raises us up**

**We dream
the future
into the heart.**

Here we recognize a »heart of spring«!

Rosemarie Monnerjahn

March 25, 2014