

ANNE-MARIE ALONZO, born in Alexandria in 1951, has lived in Montreal since 1963. She is a regular contributor to several periodicals including the feminist magazine *la Vie en rose*. *Bleus de mines*, the most recent of her four books, won the 1986 Emile Nelligan award for poetry. Two books will appear shortly, *Soi(e)* and (with Raymonde April and Denise Desautels) *Nous en reparlerons sans doute*.

SUSANNE DE LOTBINIERE-HARWOOD is a Montréal writer and translator. She has just finished sub-titling a Studio D/NFB film about three Québec women writers (Bersianik, Marchessault, Brossard), is presently translating Marchessault's recent play about Anais Nin, and attempting her first novel, *Stella Vision*, the fictionalization of a past life.

## Ritual

ANNE-MARIE ALONZO

Translation: Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood

RITUAL. Like the beginning of a letter for mailing. Where are you when I write you. And I write to you every day and day that follows without ceasing nor leaving I write and you receive and receiving makes me write (you) and I write more then under pencil of blue-and-red-and-night-blue.

Every evening as nine o'clock falls and falls thus the hours I place pencil-and-paper and thought of you that makes meaning I put the ink close by I write thus: dear think: darling and say: love. I write but arrest neither time nor wind passing by I write you on water flower tell you everything in pieces then assemble sheet-upon-sheet to make bound book.

As for you you say you read and you read sheet-upon-sheet you read story book and tale of faith you read gather up don't recognize yourself.

Text hard to voice is written as struggle surging is written struggle and desire and desire goes long and soft and long again with all forgotten times.

At these moments I wait and await you with all of being sit close by you and so close that inside sit with all of body and lean so that head brushes your shoulder and your cheeks that head turns and caresses and wets your breasts with sighs-tears-and-sighs.

You don't move nor I we stay and so stay hours at times days you-say such that time takes shape of space to fill we stay your hand touches glides and my body draws near moulds enamours more than even all previous times of all years of love.

Ritual as is said of mass.

Let us pray in our hearts let us bow in our souls I read you write let's make of each other inner portraits your fingers my mouth our lips and your teeth.

I often say as sobbing I say: you I say only that.

Then I turn sheet-upon-sheet and close book I do little at a time I turn what is to dream hush the rest resume and begin again and go to bed feverish already asleep.

But letters are mailed only from one lip to another I write from mouth-to-ear-to-mouth understood you listen-don't-listen grow wise to be found I find you join you hug you put hands on your hips your loins say to you: stay don't go nor move I say too: stay to embrace her and embrace her once again.

Write you to say and say on sheet of paper and water paper write you on rice and make pulp to be tanned fold piece by piece throw out scraps and return a thousand times to drawing board.

You say: writing doesn't resemble me.

You don't say: laugh.

And of laughter you peal sparking joy you dance-leap-and-dance you make ring-arounds and laugh at seeing me you see me astonished bewitched I say: laugh don't stop laugh some more go on laughing just for laughs and laugh for me I say: for me.

My letter on the table letter of dread.

And sheet-upon-sheet that does not amount to book but tell-and-tell especially remember poor other countries countries of cutting edges I add and you don't hear I add out of fear-and-silence I scarcely say: I come from there!

And horrors have lived only in words and stories told I say to you and scarcely also say to you: I didn't know don't remember.

Of that country men made women's deaths and deaths of drowsy women's bodies out of all that I saw only after departure as is said after the war.

I was not yet twelve years did not know knew too much already was no longer laughing.

You say: here too.

You say: differently.

Those men.

But every girl has uncle-or-father sometimes brother to lynch I say: over there too and then the cages and golden cages ruby-plated emerald bellies such wealth you-see and so many poor to feed betrayed.

Sometimes I say: so many poor.

From cairo-to-lebanon and mexico fled from florence-and-venice you know departure and return from africa have never left have left only the land and deserted earth.

Have not truly left.

Of twelve years of childhood everything remains here have no reliable memory I listen-and-read now write struggle or denounce disrupt for sure and surefire coup d'état.

In this way I increase sheet-upon-sheet and make notebook and counter-diary like accounts payable and payed I make stack to show here lies my sleeping beauty here lies the thorn and of all ages I proffer tales and fables say I'm singer with voice of veils as oriental as one might wish.

You also sing.

And from northern voice rises sharp this throat sound not plaintive sound nor dirge but voice of bird female voice of heights and voice of space never fallen affected never wounded.

Sheet music then and dotted notes black-and-white-and-black fair notes flash notes find point of support open mouth that teeth shall show or make way for screaming.

So I write: dear think: darling.

Insist only that at the outset begin love letter or not say to you: do you know history says that elsewhere was born the world elsewhere and such a short way away that writing is useless on sheet of rice or blue-and-red-and-blue-black paper as I say by night writing is useless and laugh and laugh again in full state of grace hoped-for.