

DENISE DESAUTELES teaches literature at the CEGEP of Sorel-Tracy. Her recent publications include: *En état d'urgence* (1982), *L'Ecran* (1983) and *La Répétition* (1986). She has also written radio plays for Radio-Canada: *Le cri* (1982), *Les Gitanes* (1985) and *Voix* (1986). A member of the editorial board of *La Nouvelle barre du jour*, she is a regular contributor to several literary periodicals.

The Archeologist

DENISE DESAUTELES

Translation: Susanne de Lothbinière-Harwood

At the moment the scream comes, she is still searching for her words.

A fiction without self-indulgence. She writes to avoid losing herself. Right side and wrong side at the same time. She is trying to translate the gesture and, simultaneously, its consequences. Black nails digging into the wall and the slow appearance of signs. Inscriptions of memory. Burrowed. Un-said. She is searching for some/her traces.

Could she not have known? The words learned, silent; the letters diligently traced slanting right; the opaqueness of the ruled sheet placed under the white paper. A predictable fiction. A strange one. Repetition.

She would have written like everybody else. Stories. Of no consequence.

Behind the black screen, the echo. Neutrality without vertigo. Writing that is illegible in her absence.

Could she not have known? Not have suspected? Not have distrusted the excessive order of words? Of facts? Recited them aloud with variations in tone only? Characters and passions as expected. Interchangeable. Could she have intruded into the core of the tragedy, concerned herself only with anecdotal forms and said: here, this is me: imprinting myself, writing myself? Words. Nothing but words.

Literature. Beside herself.

And yet words. Not innocent. Not evident. At the moment of picking up the pen, the apprehension of a threat. The closed space.

Left-handed writing goes digging. Between the lines or in the margin. A woman is writing herself. Knows that words do not speak (her) of themselves. Scratches the sand-coated walls. From book to book, goes through language and syntax. Disrupts the order of things. Insists. Out of order. Without certainty: nor of childhood, nor of life, nor of mother, nor of death, nor of silence, nor of vertigo, nor of child, nor of madness, nor of memory, nor of love, nor of words.

Simply attentive to the hum in the air.

Her ears huge.

In the labyrinth. Pieces of her. The text full of holes. She realizes there are no words. Must translate what does not translate. The unnamed. She comes and goes from one reality to the other; goes up, goes down seeks to create her own continuity. A story. Time in fast-forward disrupts her. Scatters her.

How to remain discreet in fiction when writing with foreign, mute or breakable signs? How to create without referring to what is creating itself inside her at that moment? Little breaches in the walls of the closed space? How not to evoke all this in a single breath? The inside and the outside.

Commenting her gesture as she writes. Slowly.

So as not to betray herself.

From this, the necessity: of the voluntary text in which she inscribes herself as archeologist. A moving text, ceaselessly reworked, ceaselessly reaffirmed. From the starting point of infinite absence. Of infinite passion. She then tells herself a different story in which the thread often tangles or breaks; where memory insists. In the beginning, a story impossible to categorize. Doubt and intuition. She writes: doubt and intuition. Translates what is being uncovered. Willingly blends fiction and what is making it occur.

Nothing will ever be obvious.

Words otherwise. A charge of desires foreign to everyday language.

She seeks the outburst. The voice.

Could even start to sing, a score annotated by hand.