

HOLOCAUST 1944

ANNE RANASINGHE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.

To my mother

I do not know
In what strange far off earth
They buried you;
Nor what harsh northern winds
Blow through the stubble,
The dry, hard stubble
Above your grave.

And did you think of me
That frost-blue December morning,
Snow-heavy and bitter,
As you walked naked and shivering
Under the leaden sky,
In that last moment
When you knew it was the end,
The end of nothing
And the beginning of nothing,
Did you think of me?

Oh I remember you, my dearest,
Your pale hands spread
In the ancient blessing
Your eyes bright and shining
Above the candles
Intoning the blessing
Blessed be the Lord....

And therein lies the agony,
The agony and the horror
That after all there was no martyrdom
But only futility -
The futility of dying
The end of nothing
And the beginning of nothing.
I weep red tears of blood.
Your blood.



ABOUT THE POET

Anne Ranasinghe, born on October 2, 1925, as Anneliese Katz in Essen, Germany, is an internationally renowned poet from Sri Lanka. Escaping from Nazi Germany to England, she married a Sri Lankan professor and became a citizen of Sri Lanka in 1956. Although primarily a poet, she has also published short stories, essays, and translations. Her works have been broadcast on radio and published in seventeen countries and translated into nine languages.

(The lines "Pale hands O. Lord" is a reference to the Jewish prayer over the Sabbath candles, traditionally performed by the mother in the home.) From Holocaust Poetry, ed. Hilda Schiff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 142-143.