

# HOLOCAUST 1944

Anne Ranasinghe



## 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.

## *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.

*[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.