



The Voice
Norman H. Pritchard
from The Matrix Poems: 1960-1970

s talk s t oo in t rude
up on t his d une
s till ness b rush e s the sea
c alm t oo s oo n g r e w
c alm ab out the s and
a few gu ll s drew in t heir w in g s
a h us h
be s ide t hem
t he r us h
l in g e r in g
fr om the v o ice
of a dr op f all in g



Sphinx (1986)
Anne Garreta
Translated by Emma Ramadan

That evening, without a glance at the audience, I steered myself toward a table tucked to the side where I always insisted on sitting, and where A*** was waiting for me. The proclamations that I had debated nonstop en route crystallised unexpectedly at the sight of A***, and I abruptly broached the subject close to my heart, as if to get it out of the way. A declaration of love is always tedious; it exceeded my patience to dilute the exasperation of my passion in a detailed statement, to represent discursively the unbearable confusion of my immediate desire—tolerating neither delay nor explanation, so much did its urgency torment me. My intentions were clear; my speech only muddled and veiled them in incoherence. I was alternating aimlessly between snippets of narration, the minutes of my interior monologue, syllogisms and images, passing without transition from slang to high style and from the trivial to the abstract without ever finding the right tone or genre in which to deliver my words. A*** was taken aback by this unprecedented bout of garrulous, confused violence.

A***'s response to the declaration I proved incapable of making was, however, perfectly clear. It could be summarised with a simple verdict: "You must not love me"—an attempt to claim that A*** was unworthy of my passion and that it would damage our friendship. A***'s propensity had always been to refrain from passionate attachments of the flesh, attachments that, once broken by misfortune, betrayal, or accident, resulted in prejudicial excess of sadness. Consequently, A*** thought it wise to disavow the idea of amorous possession, which could do nothing but exacerbate my confusion and forbid us from returning thereafter to that honest friendship, that guarantee of stability, to which we would be better off confining ourselves. That response, the arguments used to justify A***'s refusal, were attempts to disorient me; in fact they did nothing but accentuate the imperative violence of my desire. They also left room for debate. All of the notions of love A***'s reasoning invoked seemed erroneous to me, and I set about proving it. Those reasons were only a pretext; I wanted the truth. I was ranting, using cunning to obtain