

Poems by Nuria Amat

Translated by Peter Bush

She thinks her house
the writer of her woes
wields the brick like a gritty
pen, her hand bloody
from raising so many walls,
just blacked out a window
with a firmament
alcove-dark
stone is her thought,
stone her silent smile,
stone her bed, her tongue, her kitchen,
the way into the house
is across her heart.
Don't.
Her existence is a hard place.
She won't greet you.
Words choked by pain escape
like a couple in uniform
while her cats philosophize
in the yard and ask the heavens
about the man resting
or the cleft of the sex
of the woman entrenching
in her bedroom.

A man smiles at me
by the traffic lights,
I accelerate my eyes,
better not say a word,
really my mind turns grey
as I spurn his dare,
no sweetness or hope greets
the shock of love denied
he satisfies his (human?) desire
to invent women with pigeons,
if I glance his way,
my smile will earn a solemn reprimand,
then come sackings of high altars,
offerings of climacteric flesh,
keys, a hotel, a number perhaps,
stains, scent of a streetlamp interlude,
airy gestures,
whatever,
homicide.

Resist body,
Snail in the night,
reduced to larva,
cupboard without darkness,
severed poem,
failed coitus,
life.

I didn't write you a love poem,
loving you as I did,
I wondered if living for you
meant turning a cheek to your strangeness,
nor did I get the meaning of life right,
like a plant trained to breathe
the thin air from your letters,
I drank silences of pain
to loosen the knot you left,
fearing I'd mistake my voice
for the blank language of your disdain,
I scorned the hand of wrath,
and postponed till now an open threat.

But time drains,
it rains on exotic isles,
I bid my last goodbyes to a meeting,
I take a sheet of paper,
tread hard on snow,
and write you in a half-spoken rant,
there's no moment left,
even oblivion puts its passion
in this head-stone.

I'm getting old,
I dance no more,
I don't swear at the neighbours,
the nightshirt wrapped round me
covers my wings,
I've bought a future
ticket to the moon,
in case God fancies
a visit to my absence,
he'll find me dozing
in philosophical slumber
and will let me die
beneath the earth.

The murderer I carry within,
prepares her alibi:
I'll have a short barrel,
a speedy weapon,
supersonic bullets,
parabellum,
unusually,
ready for the big shot,
on target to the heart,
a white, queen-size bed,
a soft pillow, better two than one,
a door locked and bolted,
as if to hide blissful intimacy,
dark sex that I like,
wild night of satin,
preferably an anonymous room
an American hotel, if poss,
a long corridor muting footsteps,
a quiet light on the night-table,
no love letter,
nothing to conjure farewells,
a book, perhaps,
suspicious baggage,
a little forgiveness,
when I'm gone.

I love a corpse
I have never seen,
I sleep on its grave every day,
its hair is my calculus ,
cold to tenderness,
preferring the silent offices
this hand cherishes.

Call out, I don't dare,
in case her stone prison,
freezes the fleeting roses,
I caress her light, I see foul sculpted sores,
I stretch out my arms to find her face,
cement and panic smiles her photo.

I fear so much love might resurrect her,
lead her to grieve under more precarious skies,
among the disappeared from tombs,
with a right to live in death,
a sullied skull,
your eyes speak in mine,
and in my voice,
the voice of a severed daughter.

I, a wait
in your suicide prison, dry
is the food you offer,
dead the nights on my plate,
hard the bed your passion vomits,
I tell the wall:
life is too busy,
don't write me.

My cell, deaf to your calls,
begs the willow you not to
insist on visiting me,
a nail in your smile.

I propose my house become a sanatorium,
white walls bare and soundless,
voices falling like leaves,
cupboards open to nightly despair,
I will give out the medicine,
you will see to the business
of restoring the patient to his shirt,
possibly then,
between your self-sacrifice
and my temerity,
the mad will escape.

Can you write
verse without heroes?,
I see battles pass,
evenings of pyjama suicides,
shadows that disguise and vacillate,
I gnaw at bones.
You, sir, ask after my preferences,
rhymed verse
or real poems.

A weighty question indeed,
the very thought turns me grey,
speculation about demarcation
puts me on edge,
I look over your shoulder,
Professor of love and the sonnet,
bearing me a cross without hope,
to avoid lying, sir,
I complicate the debate,
as if sounds were into maths,
I choose words without profit,
cobwebs that grow and glint,
when you read me.

It's the third time you invite me to lunch.
You call my food verse,
I choose blood cordon bleu,
in fear, I come to watch you eat,
a kind of fate, sir
you lace your bread to my mouth,
put your voice to my dish,
I'd like to tell you my experience:
your voice brings me close
almost incestuously so.

You say I write
harsh things,
harsh,
mournful things,
like a tormented sentinel,
that, if you could,
you'd take an ironic shot,
at the black wasp
dictating my words.
You don't like me,
naked before your gaze,
a bitterly enlightened
woman,
that, if you could,
you'd kill the cry
from my lucidity without hope.
I cannot redeem
that murder,
I cradle a wake in my brain.
You say you're searching for my heart?
You've awoken within me
a little tenderness or frivolity,
an olive branch.
Oh, if I were a blackbird,
for sure I'd sing

Dear seducer,
how serious you seemed,
with your hidden signifier,
and list of titles,
on the tip of your tongue,
observing my hysteria
(momentary, I swear)
with scarlet scalpel,
painting my nudity,
your holy hands,
inside my buttocks,
cutting across my monologue,
set on making me vibrate,
inventing names to my face,
Cordelia, Molly, June, Justine or Beatrice,
and I rush to discover,
who is who myself,
in well-worn pages,
I underlined personal affronts,
you wanted to educate my taste,
eat my heart out, chew over
impatient sex,
fake ink,
lethal aromas from the printers,
on your palette I shouted:
how does one say I'm dying?
Your voice shook me,
your voice rather than your eyes,
or failed genius's fingers,
a coward, perhaps,
so said my psychiatrist.
I like love,
you declared,
spread I loves over the wetness,

no wine for you,
only sweat and agonic flesh.
I wrote your rules,
nervous for knowledge,
I stole the phrase from your authors,
your hunger pressed on my hopes,
forget whether I'll be a writer,
I'll be the night to your days,
stranger in my bedroom,
among pagan headstones.
I saw death that night,
when you abandoned me,
because of the gift of dying
that's unopened,
your scorn made love infinite,
begat ruins on my pillow.

What do you know about love?
The book didn't know the answer,
I destroyed that Amazon's painting
your private library included writing
by pharmacists,
anyway this delirium was short-lived,
(there were other men, yes, other men,
targeting my bed),
love and extend yourself,
love and raise mountains,
love and hate,
such was my hallowed work,
a farewell without you
and the library,
on its daily perambulation.

The window shields me,
rectangular cloud of memory,
the window shielded
by the delirium of death
tied to a window,
hanging on the night-time beacon,
for whatever movement nearby
imperils, the night,
its bedroom gusts,
like your useless shadow,
when you are about to push
my body and I pull back my legs,
mistrustful of the window,
and run down to the basement,
away from you who lick and lick
the fringes of my death.

Come,
my geography is generous,
don't fear the mouth
stolen from camellias and the fullness
of love that aspires to nothing,
my teeth no longer bite their
goodbyes, the birds fled
without the music my thought
patrols for you, I'll give you unbridled
dialogue and a wise bed of passion,
free of obligation,
thankless youth,
you are my perfect maturity,
unscarred.