

[Life & Work](#) | [Novels](#) | [Poetry](#) | [Essays](#) | [Short Stories](#) | [Theater](#) |
[About Nuria Amat \(download .zip\)](#) | [By Nuria Amat \(download .zip\)](#) | [Interviews on Radio & TV](#)

Nuria Amat

LIFE AND WORK

Nuria Amat was born in Barcelona, Spain, where she now lives. She has spent long periods in Colombia, Mexico, Berlin, Paris and the United States. Amat holds a PhD in Information Science and Technology (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona) and has taught at the Faculty of Library and Information Science, University of Barcelona. Her novels and short stories have established her as one of the foremost Spanish authors in recent years. She has also published essays and poetry, as well as written for the press and the theatre.

Noted for the quality of her prose as well as for her innovative approach to literature from her very first works (the novel *Pan de boda* and the short stories in *El ladrón de libros*), Amat has heralded metaliterary fiction for Spanish-speaking audiences in such books as *Todos somos Kafka* and *Viajar es muy difícil*, both recently reissued and translated.



Her play *Pat's Room* was premiered in Barcelona in 1997, the same year she started publishing a string of novels that ensured global visibility for her work: *La intimidación*, *El país del alma* (shortlisted for the Rómulo Gallegos International Novel Prize in 2001), and *Reina de América*, which won the Ciudad de Barcelona Award in 2002. Amat's work has been translated to English, French, Italian, Hungarian, Romanian, Arabic, Portuguese, and Swedish. *Queen Cocaine*, the English version of *Reina de América*, was shortlisted for the renowned IMPAC literary award in 2007. Her two most recent novels are *Deja que la vida llueva sobre mí* (2008), and *Amor y Guerra*, winner of the Ramon Llull Catalan Literary Award in 2011, and published in Catalan (Edicions 62), Spanish (Planeta) and French (Éditions Robert Laffont).

Letra herida, *El libro mudo*, *Escribir y callar* and *Juan Rulfo*, an original biography of the renowned Mexican writer, stand out among Amat's published essays. She has collected her poetry in *Amor infiel* (2004), an extraordinary recreation of Emily Dickinson's poetic universe, and *Poemas impuros* (2008).

In November 2008, she was invited by Carlos Fuentes and Gabriel García Márquez to participate as guest lecturer at the Julio Cortázar Seminar in Mexico.



Invitation to participate in the Cátedra Julio Cortázar (Mexico)

In October 2013 Amat received the Order Alejo Zuloaga in Venezuela, where she was invited to pronounce the inaugural speech in Valencia's Book Fair. Notable among previous recipients and participants to this event are Fernando Savater, Carlos Monsiváis, Antonio Gamoneda, Julio Ortega and Antonio Skármeta.

NOVELS

AMOR Y GUERRA (“Love and War”)

Premi Ramon Llull, 2011
Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 2011

Translation:
France: *Feux d'été* (Laffont)

“The crux of *Love and War* is how fantasies become memories and the astounding power bestowed on us by imagination to overcome the worst disasters of war, as well as our daily misfortunes.”

Fabienne Bradu at the book launch of *Amor y guerra*, Casa Museo Leon Trotsky, Mexico.



“A war described by a military strategist on a map becomes an explanation. If told by a soldier at the front, it’s little more than a tale full of roar and moaning, signifying confusion. But Nuria Amat’s silken prose hints at the possibility of a third way: a map which, like Borges’, coincides point for point with its own territory, that is, with language.”
César Aira

Love and War (and not *War and Peace*, although the title is clearly a wink to Tolstoy’s) is a **passionate, penetrating, far-reaching chronicle of a love story in the midst of terror, set against the background of the Spanish Civil War in Barcelona.** Artfully narrated in a luminous style with the right doses of distance and precision, we can now read this novel in Catalan, as it was first published after winning the the Ramon Llull Award in 2011, and in Spanish. In both cases, it bears the sanction of her author’s solid literary career (*La intimidad, El país del alma, Deja que la vida llueva sobre mí...*) and maybe also the liabilities attendant upon an author who has had to deal with all sorts of poetical hesitations, while trying to make sense of the bits and snippets of a story a thousand times told in her family circle: none other than the controversial legend of the Stalinist agent Ramón Mercader.”

Pilar Castro. El Cultural. 2012

“It is always a pleasure to discover a great writer in the vast circle of authors writing in Spanish. Nuria Amat is definitely not an author enrolled at the media circus, but she certainly is a full-blooded novelist, capable of embracing spectacular literary challenges.”
Daniel Sada

“The last book of a great writer always comes as a result of those distant books she has published before. This is all too true in Nuria Amat’s case. Were it not for her captivating *La intimidad* and *Todos somos Kafka*, we would not be able to revel now in the painful delights of *Amor y Guerra*. Proof that she is well aware of this are the masterful liberties she takes with her craft. Spiraling through the story she narrates and refining it as it unfolds, the author at the same time resignifies all her previous work. I like to imagine her rereading what she had just written, and immediately feeling the weight of her memories stretching back to that dreadful first childhood memory and zooming forward to the image of a woman seen hanging from her window, and projecting onto her the collective death that now embraces all of them, victims and butchers of the Spanish Civil War.”

Néstor Braunstein. Casa Museo Trotsky. Mexico.

“Following the tracks left by Ramon Mercader in Barcelona through an impossible love story between a man and a woman that were not meant to be together, Nuria Amat plumbs the darkest hours of the Spanish Civil War. Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes and Juan Goytisolo, who happen to be her literary mentors, for years have seen in this Catalan novelist the great promise of a renewal of the genre in the Hispanic world.”

Serge Raffy. Le Nouvel Observateur. N.XXXX. 2012

“Those who discovered the glacial Ramon Mercader through Leonardo Padura’s *The Man Who Loved Dogs* should pounce on Nuria Amat’s new novel.

The Catalan writer, who has family ties to the Mercaders, gives us here much more than a portrait of Trotsky’s murderer — an intimate appraisal of Ramon Mercader. Whereas Padura, stuck in Havana, had to rely on the incomplete accounts by historians of the criminal career of this infamous Stalinist hitman, Amat has tracked and talked to the survivors.

Historical accuracy and clear-headedness, so rare among narrators, brings this novel to the heights of a Greek tragedy.

Gérard Guégan. Loisirs Lire.

“Nuria Amat takes a deep dive into the darkest hours of the Spanish Civil War in this great novel in which love and history collide and mingle.

No doubt *Love and War* is an enthralling love story, but also a necessary wake-up call for our memory.”

Sylvie Lainé. L’Indépendant.



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FEUX D'ÉTÉ

Núria AMAT

Traduit par
Marie VILA CASAS

« La meilleure romancière actuelle est Nuria Amat ».
Juan Goytisolo, El País

Dans l'exaltation combattante de la défense de Barcelone contre les militaires putschistes, en juillet 1936, la jeune anarchiste Valentina Mur fait la connaissance du militant des Jeunesses communistes Ramón Mercader, qui se rendra célèbre quatre ans plus tard en assassinant Trotski. Mais c'est d'un jeune bourgeois romantique, Artur, le cousin de Mercader, que Valentina tombe éperdument amoureuse. Elle remue ciel et terre pour le faire sortir des geôles clandestines staliniennes ou, accusé de collaboration avec les putschistes, il est torturé.

Dans une Barcelone bombardée quotidiennement, Valentina et Artur (qui vit caché) s'aiment, refont le monde, résistent. Leur amour croît, se développe dans une ville chaque jour plus meurtrie, acculée, encerclée par les forces de Franco. La jeune féministe anarchiste et le bourgeois qui rêve d'être poète se marient en secret. Et, alors qu'Artur est emprisonné, Valentina vient lui apprendre qu'elle est enceinte. La défaite des républicains est désormais certaine, les troupes de Franco avancent sur la Catalogne, et Barcelone. Avec des centaines d'autres détenus, Artur est utilisé comme bouclier humain pour protéger la retraite des communistes vers la France, tandis que Valentina tente, parmi des milliers de réfugiés, de gagner la frontière...

Biographie

Née en 1950 à Barcelone, Núria Amat est un auteur catalan écrivant en espagnol. Elle a publié de nombreux ouvrages, des essais, de la poésie, des romans dont *Feux d'été*, le premier écrit en catalan. Son roman *Reina de América* a obtenu le prix Ciutat de Barcelone en 2002, et il a été sélectionné dans sa traduction anglaise (*Queen Cocaine*) pour le prix international IMPAC 2007. Ses livres sont traduits dans de nombreuses langues, parmi lesquelles l'anglais, l'italien, l'allemand, le hongrois, le roumain, l'arabe, le portugais, le suédois ou le tchèque. En France, *Nous sommes tous Kafka* a paru chez Allia....



DEJA QUE LA VIDA LLUEVA SOBRE MÍ (“Let Life Rain Down On Me”)

Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 2008

Translation Rights: Czech Republic: Euromedia

The need to write can at times become obsessive. Driven by the urge to faithfully register the steady stream of life, the author has had to retrace each and every step that has led her where she now stands, from her mother's premature demise to her uncharacteristic relation with her father, through the crooked games she played as a child to the final moments of a marriage gone cold, toeing a tight rope of lovers and erotic experiences, tracing a wide arc that encompasses both the bitterness felt at having to endure an unwanted presence to the efforts at moving abreast of her daughters, darting like shoots of a wild plant, in search of a stronghold for joy and pain.

The woman who inhabits this novel is convinced that only the things that could be put down in writing were really meant to be lived by her, and that their most precious legacy lies in this ink-trail of vital beautiful words they have left behind. "My will to live," says she, "stems from this striving after language. If and when I can put into words an experience defines the way I relate to the sea, music, a storm, friendship, emotions... I thus live in a world that seems to have turned upside down, where feelings are born of written words and events are predated by them.

"This book by Nuria Amat is a poem about the possibility and impossibility of being happy. It is also a literary confirmation."

Carlos Fuentes, *El País*. *Babelia*.

"Deja que la vida llueva sobre mí is one of those rare books in which the reader is requested to collaborate and made to share in a fascinating voyage through different forms of life. All he/she has to do is bring his or her own ideas and experiences to bear upon the blanks left by the author in her fabric, as well as her rants on topical questions."

Ricardo Senabre, *El Cultural*

"... the key to her writing lies in an ongoing shedding of fixed identities, those constant and immutable identities steeped in national pride, religious affiliation, ideology or genre, identities lethal to otherness that deny the invaluable diversity of human nature."

Juan Goytisolo, *Babelia*, *El País*

"And finally here it is, this gigantic novel, an immense novel, a global novel, a novel that whets the reader's appetite to search and probe in the past and from now on for every scrap of writing by this author: Let life rain down on me. A novel that rummages in our very origins and dares to dream of a better future than this aimless rambling on we live by."

Carmina Navía Velasco. Escuela de Estudios Literarios.

REINA DE AMÉRICA / QUEEN COCAINE

Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 2001

Ciudad de Barcelona Award 2002

***Queen Cocaine*, shortlisted for the IMPAC Literary Award 2007**

Translation Rights:

Mexico: Ediciones Era

South America: Grupo Editorial Norma, Bogotá

USA: City Lights, San Francisco

Portugal: Casa das Letras/Editorial Notícias, Lisbon

Romania: Leda Books, Grupul Editorial Corint, Bucarest

Sweden: Themis

Hungary: Patrick Könyvek, Leányfalu
Germany/Switzerland: Edition 8 Verlag, Zürich

*Wilson smoked two cigarettes at a time. One hung from his lips while he grabbed the other
between his fingers, like a pencil.
Not wanting to forget what he was reading, he raised his eyes and said he had spent all day
thinking it was dark.
So what, thought I. I shook my head but didn't say a word. There was this bitter taste in my
mouth and my tongue felt dry.
I wished I'd asked him why he'd gone so far looking for me.*

There are three main characters in *Queen Cocaine*. Rat, a young Catalan woman newly arrived in Colombia, where she discovers there is another side to reality which until then had been concealed from her. Then there is Aida, a black visionary woman expert at casting spells with whom Rat strikes up a strange friendship. Finally, a man, Wilson, through whom the two women meet, a writer and reporter who always lives close to the edge, hesitating between joining the guerrilla movement, retiring to a life brimming with violence or maybe plunging into the shady world of narcotics traffickers. The fierce conflict between the guerrilla and the army is the background to the flaming love and revolutionary passion with which all three characters are imbued. They are outstandingly captured by a prose, pristine and alert as well as intensely poetical.

Queen Cocaine is a first-rate literary feat. It is based on one of the most burning contemporary issues, which it recreates and shapes into an ambitious novel. It has justly been received with wide applause.

“How does a Spanish woman writer get to write one of the most breathtaking Latin American novels of recent years? Furthermore, how can it be that one of the most breathtaking Latin American novels of recent years is written by a Catalan woman writer? This novel is a sheer prodigy of literary invention.”

William Ospina, *El Tiempo, Bogotá.*

“There is a precedent to this great novel: *The Vortex*, by José Eustasio Rivera, a classic of Colombian literature. But this is a *Vortex* rewritten by Marguerite Duras.”

César Aira, *Babelia, El País*

“As a novelist, she creates a whole new world of her own. In this novel she asserts a truly genuine narrative voice, infused with the right tone, perfectly audible amid the common din by virtue of her love and respect for the word.”

Juan Goytisolo, *Letras Libres*

“Let's talk about literature, then, about talent and professionalism. Let's talk about *Reina de América*. Nuria Amat does not write, she shoots out.”

Carlos Zanón, *Avui*

“It brings to mind *The Green House*, by Vargas Llosa, or the monumental descriptions of nature by Carpentier, but it also reminds one of Faulkner, Rulfo, Onetti... *Reina de América* is worth all these comparisons.”

Ulf Eriksson, *Dagens Nyheter*, Suecia

“Amat’s fictional view of war-ravaged Colombia has all the elements of a dramatic action novel, but the violence here is internalized, manifest in the language of the storytelling itself.”

Anderson Tepper, *New York Times*

“An acute, grimly poetic account of a South American heart of darkness.”

Publishers Weekly

“An apocalyptic novel. A brilliant portrayal of the horrors of drug cultivation; recommended for all general collections, especially where there is an interest in Latin American culture.”

Library Journal

“A revelatory tale that reads like the testimony of a shell-shocked survivor.”

Kirkus Reviews

EL PAÍS DEL ALMA (“A Country for the Soul”)

Barcelona: Seix-Barral, 1999

Mexico: Ediciones Era

Barcelona: Colección Escritoras de Hoy. Planeta d’Agostini (paperback)

Shortlisted for the Rómulo Gallegos International Novel Prize 2001

My brother’s days, said Nena, were numbered. First, they took them to Barcelona’s prison. Then they were sent to Campo de León, the harshest, ice-cold camp during the war. And at the very last moment, when it had been decided that they would be executed, my brothers managed to escape and avoided the firing squad.

El país del alma is a love story and the story of a hidden humiliation, that of a city, Barcelona, sordidly degraded in the aftermath of the Civil War. A city that chose in 1952 to turn its back on its own deep wounds and embrace instead the cheap exaltation of the International Eucharistic Congress.

With the frail remnants of Nena Rocamora’s life and her love for Baltus Arnau, the author draws a map of spoils. The scions of Catalan and Republican families, expelled from public life, grope their way along the streets of a silenced city, unable and unwilling to renounce their heritage.

Fictional and real characters cross paths in this depiction of individual and collective life, which seems to reflect these lines in a poem by Luis Cernuda: *Airy yet adamant, like a glass / easily broken that nobody can bend*. Nena Rocamora's story is, at bottom, the account of a sacrifice, recounted through the struggles of an all too vulnerable human being trapped in merciless times.

"Highest praise from the critics, and a big success among readers."

A. Rodriguez Fischer, ABC

"The voice in Nuria Amat's novels is a gift infused with beauty and fate, like all real gifts. Having said that, and allowances made for fate's bountiful mediation, it must yet be reminded that Nuria's voice is also the result of untiring devotion and passionate work. Nuria Amat is a writer whose main passion lies in the very act of writing."

Ángeles Mastretta

"One of the best portraits of a couple of lovers to appear in Spanish literature in the last years."

E. Ayala-Dip, Babelia, El País

"An unusual beauty is offered us in this book, so daring in its narrative structure, in its relentless pursuit of a thorough rhythm, which is so difficult to create... A sublime love story."

Pilar Castro, El Cultural, La Razón

"For those of us who thought that maybe the novel as a genre deserved a mercy killing, *El país del alma* gives us a chance to reconsider our decision."

Eduardo Mendoza, Ajoblanco

"*El país del alma* is, above all, style. Grand style."

Quim Aranda, Avui

"Exquisite story by Nuria Amat."

Manuel Hidalgo, El Mundo

"A literary voice closely related to Duras' or Woolf's. One of the deepest and most genuine voices in contemporary Catalan fiction written in Spanish."

Zulema Moret, Quimera

"Amat's sharp-clear prose is illuminated by brilliant thoughts and finely wrought descriptions, and at times shot through with bursts of premonitions and melancholy."

Juan Antonio Masoliver Ródenas, La Jornada Semanal, México

"What does Nuria Amat aim at? At nothing less than drawing a map of a "country of the soul" (Barcelona, Catalonia), inhabited by defeated souls, broken destinies, a world lost. And this she fulfills splendidly, making of defeat, wreckage and loss the very stuff of her

writing. More than a novel, a closely woven tissue of voices, a polyphony as arresting as the one designed by Woolf in *The Waves*.

Emotion and daring, sense and reason are Amat's guides through her country of the soul. A country that is unique, with no equivalent in Spanish literature."

Ana Nuño, *The Barcelona Review*

"Nuria Amat probably is the writer that takes the boldest risks, knowingly and wilfully, among contemporary Spanish authors."

Mario Campaña, *Verbigracia, El Universal, Caracas*

LA INTIMIDAD ("Intimacy")

Madrid: Alfaguara, 1997

Translation Rights:

Sweden: Tranan *

Egypt: Dar El Hilal *

USA: City Lights, San Francisco

Romania: Corin *

The window in my room was a boon. From it I could see what happened in the street, those very rare and yet extremely interesting things that went on in my deserted street. I could also spy on the building across the street, a psychiatric institution or nursing home for the ailing offspring of affluent families, still not completely immune to madness and melancholy.

The main character in this novel writes unreadable texts and reads from Dickens, Brontë, Laforet. The house where she lives is her family home, where a happy and easy atmosphere prevails, or so it seems, even to burglars. Actually, it's a world lost and forlorn, the world of a woman haunted by the memories of two marriages gone wrong.

She remembers other things as well, though indeed only a few. For instance, she remembers the poet J. V. Foix running his bakery in Barcelona, the psychiatric hospital directly opposite her house, the Sarrià cemetery, her mother's death. As a matter of fact, her whole life is transfixed by her mother's death and spellbound by that hospital, where she will be admitted after her father dies, only to learn that her fate was sealed the moment she witnessed as a child a suicide that took place within its walls.

La intimidad is an incurable case of authentic and uncompromising literary mania, a relentless monologue on life and death, on the madness and passion that visit those who read and write. A ravishing, beautiful book.

"An unusual novel in our current literary landscape."

Julio Ortega, *El País*

“So many things are offered by this novel, in addition to an exquisite, extraordinarily sensitive anxiety.”

Agustín Cerezales

“She manages to create a real narrative world.”

Juan Antonio Masoliver Ródenas, *La Vanguardia*

“*La intimidad* is a beautiful novel written by a narrator who takes us for a walk with love and death, and madness and suicide, and the passion for reading and writing, in a splendid monologue of great literary value.”

Natíel Preciado, *Revista Tiempo*

“A hot gush of literary ink runs through its veins and invigorates its characters.”

Eduardo Haro Tecglen, *El País*

“*La intimidad*: a skilful combination of intelligence and critical sharpness.”

Juan Goytisolo, *The Times Literary Supplement*

“In this novel, more than in any of her other books, Nuria Amat not only proves able to fuse life, literature and fiction, she also turns literature (the experience of literature the narrator has access to through her readings) into biography and, at the same time, transforms this into the elements of fiction. A really serious work that cuts deep.”

Ana María Moix

VIAJAR ES MUY DIFÍCIL (“Traveling Is So Difficult”)

Madrid: Anaya Mario Muchnik, 1995

Reissued by Bruquera, Barcelona, 2008

Contrary to what tourists think and actually do, travelling is terribly difficult. It takes, for instance, having floundered, as it were, on purpose. A willingness in the traveler to hide away in the deepest recess of the universe, and thence sail forth in search of eternal, unknown places.

In *Viajar es muy difícil* Nuria Amat draws a map of literary cities from the past (Kafka's Prague, Pessoa's Lisbon, Kavafis' and Durrell's Alexandria) and walks us through them. But what she invites the tourist to admire are not the usual artistic and cultural highlights, but the more modest elements (streets, pavements, street-lamps, asylums) that make up the spiritual and mental landscape of some of the greatest writers of our time.

A radical work by Amat, widely acclaimed when first brought out and now republished. In it, the author anticipates the dizzying crossover between genres that has now become our staple literary diet.

A book that is really unique — writes Ana María Moix in her foreword to this reissue — and yet it is impossible to consider it only as a marvelously inordinate and extravagant artifact. It manifests such a secret accord with the true nature of literature that it makes one wonder whether the inordinate and extravagant thing isn't rather our insisting in writing stories in the traditional manner.

Published in 1995, Viajar es muy difícil was then considered — and should still be considered — an example of generic uncertainty. Neither an essay nor a novel nor a travelogue, but partaking of all of these, it is a pioneering work anticipating a literary form that is almost mainstream nowadays. All the elements surrounding the writer at work and the very act of writing become here the matter of an anti-narrative made up of fiction, imaginary autobiography and metaliterature.

“¿Is this a travel book, a fictional tourist guide to literary cities, an essay on cultural geography, a novel for culture freaks? Actually, it does not really matter which genre this wonderful book by Nuria Amat belongs to, the really important thing is that it embraces all of them with an ease that seems perfectly natural. Above all, it is a book that challenges us to follow suit and set out on our own literary voyage.”

Juan Senís-Fernández, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha

“Amat’s books are so peculiar, and she so obsessively revolves around literature while rejecting the conventional genres, that it’s as if she was searching for an untouched place that belongs only to her.”

Patricia Gabancho. La Vanguardia.

TODOS SOMOS KAFKA (“We Are All Kafka”)

Madrid: Anaya-Mario Muchnik, 1993

Barcelona: Reverso, 2004

Translation Rights:

Francia: Editions Allia, Paris

I closed the book, turned on the TV and his face appeared. Then I said to myself: Reader, this man is destined to become your main character. Anyway, for some time you only knew that the stranger had just survived an attempted suicide. See? You saved his life, Reader. I had brought back to life this man who otherwise would have succeeded in killing himself or would have been as good as dead for the life I was just about to offer him.

This original novel is narrated by a reader, or rather by a woman who reads and has the ability to transform herself at will into Kafka’s daughter or Joyce’s wife. She watches as her father flirts with her friends, survives along with his manuscripts the fire that destroyed their family home, goes on to share her husband’s exile, silence and cunning, puts up with her mad daughter and young maniacs like Beckett, stops writing, even though she had always written furtively, behind closed doors.

A brilliant and subtle illustration of the art of variation, *Todos somos Kafka* is a self-creating and self-devouring novel that dares bring into play all novels, all the books in the shelves, all literature and all the authors who ever wrote books.

“To the old couples author-writer, library-book, writing-reader, Nuria Amat has added a new companion, a feminine ghost who dares to interrupt, with impish delight at times, the logical and imaginary order they represent, brazenly taking center stage (the stage comes in the shape of a bed) to tangle things up, to mix and complicate, sublimate, murder, bring to life again, baptize and strip of authority, to pawn and cheat, fertilize and castrate each and every line ever written by any author on earth, for the sake of any reader who has ever read a book, and particularly for the sake of the reader now reading her book and the one who certainly will in the future.”

Carlos Fuentes. “Foreword to the 2004 edition, reproduced in *Cahier de l’Herne*”.

“A book that fulfills Benjamin’s wish to found a new genre while at the same time exhausting and abolishing it.”

José María Valverde

“An extraordinary challenge, brimming with a delightful sense of humor. Nuria Amat’s voice is unmistakable.”

Rosa Montero

“A whole library, full of irony and sensibility.”

Nora Catelli

“Reminds one of Monterroso rather than Calvino, but with more enthusiasm and youth, at least, than both.”

Alfredo Bryce Echenique

“A display of creative energy unusual indeed.”

Eduardo Mendoza

POETRY

POEMAS IMPUROS (“Impure Poems”)

Barcelona: Bruguera, 2008

*Experience
is the past
summarized in one phrase
clear and perfect*

like an echo.

The author of these poems is considered as one of the less orthodox and more aesthetically liberated writers in contemporary literature written in Spanish, but she is, above all, an alchemist of words. Radical in her approach to love and lovelessness, to the havoc caused by time on both body and soul, her work, made of passion, beauty and pain, is sparked off by the sheer power of language.

How can these poems be so impure, when they are so obviously fed by an energy so pure? Poems that speak to and from Eros or decay or language, leaving me with questions and yet forbidding me to answer them. I can only say that Nuria Amat's words cast such a spell on me that I have felt the urge to make them my own and translate them into my own language.

Carol Maier, translator, among others, of works by María Zambrano and Rosa Chacel. *

"For various reasons, this is a notable and extraordinary book. The words in it are everyday words, it's true, but the complexity they marshal points to a place beyond language, whence they extract their subtle meanings, relations and rhythms. The mood they create reminds one of Alfonsina Storni, Alejandra Pizarnik, Emily Dickinson or Blanca Varela, voices able to communicate the depths of erotic passion. The effect is heartrending, and carried by a voice imbued with the unmistakable tinge of human truth, which is always impure."

José Miguel Oviedo, *Letras Libres*

"This book is a real challenge to the poetic tradition of Spain. Suffice it to say that its title, *Impure Poems*, is an echo of Juan Ramón Jiménez's "pure poetry". But these poems "by a bitter visionary woman" are light-years away from the emotional frame of the *Diary of a newly-wed poet*. In *Impure Poems*, various women converse with their parents, husbands, lovers and the lovers of their husbands. It is an original universe where heteronymous voices engage in a cruel soul-searching with whatever means at hand: dramatic scenes, aphorisms, table-talk, bed-talk after getting laid. Poetry by the XXIst century accursed she-poet."

Peter Bush, translator of *Queen Cocaine*

"These poems, straightforward and knowing, exude skeptical vitality. With this book, Amat has (forever) stopped being only a prose writer."

Luis Antonio de Villena, *El Periódico de Cataluña*

AMOR INFIEL ("Unfaithful Love")

Emily Dickinson por Nuria Amat (Emily Dickinson by Nuria Amat)

Madrid: Losada, 2004

Emily Dickinson is now considered a towering presence among the most influent and innovative poets. Although she led a secret and solitary life, her work, embodied in more than two thousand poems and about one thousand letters, has kept growing over the years in the public's esteem.

This book offers a selection of Dickinson's poems and extracts from her correspondence, sifted through Nuria Amat's notorious skills as a reader, writer and translator. The result is a

series of highly lyrical texts in which two personalities, like two equally clear yet distinct drops of ink, share in a common femininity and sensibility and sing to human nature.

Amor infiel is not easy to define. It is not a translation proper, but neither is it an original poetry book. The author has transformed extracts of letters into whole poems. She also invents titles for each composition, a practice that departs from what was customary in Dickinson's case. Yet beyond this apparent "treason", a deeper loyalty emerges. "I identify with her completely," says Amat. "To me, *Amor infiel* is my most personal book, I feel closer to it than to my own novels."

In other words, this is a book one must visit very often, as one visits a friend for the shared secrets and tacit consent. It is meant to become one of those lifelong bedside books where we turn in search of answers. And we find them indeed, dressed up in clean shiny words, gleaming with beauty and poetry. The cross between the two authors has generated a chemical reaction difficult to describe, yet that seems as natural as if it were the product of a single element, unalloyed and pure.

"Great poets yearn for great readers. A fine work also needs a fine mind to interpret it. Here we witness one of these rare, happy conjunctions. Amat reads Dickinson without striving after accuracy, and in so doing reinvigorates her."

Gustavo Martín Garzo. *El País*.

ESSAY

JUAN RULFO. El arte del silencio ("The Art of Silence")

Barcelona: Omega, 2003
'Vidas Literarias' Series, directed by Nuria Amat

Juan Rulfo is one of the great literary authors of the XXth century. Gabriel García Márquez has compared him with Franz Kafka and Carlos Fuentes set him on a par with D. H. Lawrence or William Faulkner. In this biography, Amat unveils correspondences between the Mexican writer's stance and Walter Benjamin, W. G. Sebald, Robert Walser, Hugo von Hoffmannsthal and other great taciturn authors.

"Only an author can shed light on the life of another writer". This is the motto adopted by Nuria Amat for the series of biographies she is in charge of editing. Authors like Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Edwards, Juan Goytisolo or Eduardo Mendoza have accepted to profile the lives of Baroja, Borges, Calderón, Cernuda, Cortázar, Cervantes, Darío, Lezama Lima, Olga Orozco or Fernando Pessoa, to name only a few. Now it's her turn to comply with her own rules and offer the public an account of Rulfo's life and the origins of his work. (This book was presented by Juan Pablo Rulfo, Juan Rulfo's son, at the Guadalajara International Book Fair, Dec. 3rd 2003.)

“The best work on the Mexican writer.”
Carlos Fuentes. *El País. Babelia.*

“Far from producing a bagful of trivia on Juan Pérez Vizcaíno, this book offers a reflection and interpretation of the many forking paths Juan Rulfo explored before he felt he had run out of the creative urge to write. His silence and the way silence can also be a creative undercurrent is the hidden theme that runs through this book, a sort of biographical essay.”
Roberto García Bonilla, *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*

“With great narrative skill, Amat highlights the elements that probably moved Rulfo to create the atmosphere and language in that absolute literary masterpiece of his, *Pedro Páramo*.”
Ana Becciu, *Babelia, El País*

LETRA HERIDA (“Letter Struck”)

Madrid: Alfaguara, 1998

A collection of essays, reflections, aphorisms, and short stories where experience, fiction and literary allusion intermingle in a new approach to literature.

“After reading *Letra herida*, one is convinced that only through literature can her author attain real beauty and get in touch with the material world. At any rate, it surely proves the most effective way for her.

Nuria Amat’s foremost virtue is being “well-read”. A virtue that gives her the freedom to write and share her experience as a reader.”

Carlos Ortega. *ABC Cultural.*

EL LIBRO MUDO (“The Silenced Book”)

Madrid: Anaya-Mario Muchnik, 1994

An essay on the apparent discord between the book and the computer, the computer-literate and the poet, illuminated by Amat’s knowledge of both worlds and her enthusiasm at the possibilities they both offer.

“What dawns through this suggestive, charming and enjoyable book by Nuria Amat is a proud vindication of the reader.”

Dámaso Santos. *Babelia. El País*”.

DE LA INFORMACIÓN AL SABER (“From Information to Knowledge”)

Madrid: Fundesco, 1990

A distress signal on the current excess of information and its negative effects on culture, bound up with a reflection on writing as an alternative both to this phenomenon and the stagnation of thinking.

“If you’ve already read this intelligent author, then you know Nuria Amat is good news.”
Eduardo Haro Tecglen. Babelia. El País.

SHORT STORIES

EL SIGLO DE LAS MUJERES (“The Age of Women”)

Barcelona: Ediciones del Bronce, 2000

Juan Goytisolo has recommended this book in an article, praising the sharpness with which her author portrays passion from a woman’s vantage point and the way she recreates it in a series of poetic approaches to myths and stories on women in love celebrated by literature. From Cleopatra to Scheherazade or Brunhild, an exceptional guide to the world of classical heroines.

MONSTRUOS (“Monsters”)

Madrid: Anaya-Mario Muchnik, 1991

Italian translation: *Mostri*. Rome: Biblioteca del Vascello, 1995.

A successful rewriting of famous myths, these short stories offer an amazing series of variations on the various facets of towering archetypal figures, such as Romeo and Juliet, Faust, Scheherazade or Judith, among many others. All of them are reinvigorated by the author’s unexpected approach, which transforms them in beacons of our human condition.

“But I’d hate to sound picky with the author of this splendid book, infused with the rare virtue of proposing from the very start a lively dialogue (at times turning to an also lively discussion) to its readers, who only feel too happy to answer the intelligent inducements offered them by the author.

Manuel Cerezales. ABC Cultural

AMOR BREVE (“Brief Love”)

Barcelona: Muchnik, 1990.

Círculo de Lectores,

These short stories, that could well be defined as essays cloaked in narrative garb or tales disguised as essays, focus on parody and intellectual wit, with constant cross-referencing to other books or authors. They are driven by literary stamina and at times by

an irony that darts through its diverse narrative strategies, from the letter form to the journal entry, the anonymous note or the newspaper article, and are always rounded off with inevitable as well as surprising endings.

Of special note is the story that gives its title to the volume, "Brief Love", about a real encounter between the author and Samuel Beckett.

EL LADRÓN DE LIBROS ("The Man Who Stole Books")

Barcelona: Muchnik, 1988

The author, a self-confessed bibliophile, runs the gamut of her passion for books, comparing her case with that of others impaired by bibliomania. She shows how this ailment can lead to kleptomania, as in the eponymous story. Through a detailed description of this malady and a prescription for its cure — namely, bibliotherapy — the author points to the consequences of new technologies on libraries and upholds the immortal power of the book as an object of endless desire.

NARCISO Y ARMONÍA ("Narcissus and Harmony")

Barcelona: Puntual Ediciones-Ajoblanco, 1982

The impossible love between the beautiful and solitary Harmony and Narcissus, a young homosexual who has never had sex with a woman. Although narrated as a classic mainstream novel, the author conceives two different endings to this story. The language, sensuous and baroque, highlights the farcical aspects of an "indecorous love", while exploring how one can knowingly fall prey to an impossible love and escape from it.

PAN DE BODA ("A Toast to the Newlyweds")

Barcelona: La Sal. Edicions de les dones, 1979

In this, her first novel, Amat demystifies the typical "happy ending" enshrined in a wedding, according to the defiant tenets of the 70s. Although clearly a novel, it is written like poetry in free verse and distributed in stanzas, with a style defined by its musical qualities and experimental bent. Through the interior monologue of Maite, its character-narrator, Amat weaves a novel that transgresses all mainstream narrative rules and marks her first act of defiance against traditional story-telling.

THEATRE

PAT'S ROOM

Author: Nuria Amat

Staging: Carme Portacelli

A play revolving around a suicidal character. The dialogues alternate Catalan with Spanish, in an attempt to mirror the linguistic complexity of Barcelona. The play was premiered at Sala Beckett, Barcelona, as part of the Grec Festival of Barcelona 1997.

About Nuria Amat

The [zip](#) file (17Mb) can be downloaded following the link which includes the following articles (<http://www.nuriaamat.com/dossier/sobre.zip>):

- *Coke Is It: The Name's Cervantes—Wilson Cervantes*, por Anderson Tepper, Village Voice
- *Reina de América*, por Ricardo Senabre, El Mundo (El Cultural)
- Entrevista a Nuria Amat, por Mario Campaña, Revista Guaraguao
- *El hombre de los tabaquitos*, por Antonio López Ortega, El Nacional (Venezuela)
- *Eros, Ethics, and Emily Dickinson in English via Nuria Amat's Faithless (Spanish) Love*, por Carol Maier
- *Narra Amat la guerra*, por Silvia Isabel Gómez, Reforma
- *Amor y guerra*, por Pilar Castro, El Mundo (El Cultural)
- *El amor en tiempos de guerra*, por Josep Massot, La Vanguardia
- *Deja que la vida*, por Marketa Pilatova, Lidove Novini
- *It's so hard to be a catalan*, por Joan Barril, El Periódico
- *Núria Amat gana el Ramon Llull con su primera novela en catalán*, por Felip Palou, La Vanguardia
- *Núria Amat gana el Lull con una novela ambientada en 1936*, por Andreu Manresa, El País
- *El nacionalismo más radical carga contra Amat por defender las "dos lenguas" de Cataluña*, La Voz de Barcelona
- *Love unfaithful but true: Reflections on Amor Infiel: Emily Dickinson por Nuria Amat*, por Carol Maier
- *Nuria Amat*, por Carlos Fuentes, El País
- *Poemas Impuros*, por José Miguel Oviedo, Letras Libres
- *Carlos Fuentes y Gabo invitan a Nuria Amat a la Cátedra Julio Cortázar*, por Matías Néspolo, El Mundo
- *Autobiografía inventada*, por Ma Ángeles Cabré, La Vanguardia
- *Palabras de Peter Bush*, traductor, sobre Poemas Impuros
- *La poetisa Nuria Amat*, por Israel Punzano, El País
- *Escritora a secas*, por Juan Goytisolo, El País
- *Un divertimento sin puntos ni comas*, por Carme Basté, El Mundo
- *El País del Alma: Historia de las más literaria de las muertes*, por Nuria Capdevila-Argüelles
- *La Intimidad de Nuria Amat, Remedio para melancólicos*, por Julio Ortega
- *Literatura ca o mare familie*, Luminita Marcu, Observator Cultural
- *Deja que la vida llueva sobre mí*, por Ricardo Senabre, El Mundo
- *La conspiración del club de los ocho*, por Laura Fernández, El Mundo
- *Voces entre la selva*, César Aira, El País
- *Nuria Amat: nous sommes tous Kafka*, por Carlos Fuentes
- *La sombra dilatada de Kafka*, por Carlos Fuentes
- *Amor infiel, y fidelidad al amor*, por Luis Nogales Pita, El Semanal
- *Raíces de Rulfo*, por Anna Becció, El País
- *Knakr, våld och rättslöshet i gåtfulla aforismer*, DN Kultur

- *Nuria Amat: algunos retratos de Juan Pérez Vizcaíno*, por Roberto García Bonilla, Espéculo (UCM)

Un Nuria Amat

The zip file (1.9 Mb) can be downloaded following the link and includes:

- *El circo patriótico*, El País, 16 de septiembre de 2007
- *El tigre está en los libros. Visiones literarias*, Feria Internacional del libro de la Universidad de Carabobo, 23 de octubre de 2013
- *Kafka en Francfort*, El País, 16 de octubre de 2006
- *Kafka und Katalonien*, Wert, 10 de octubre de 2007
- *Las intrusas*, El País, 3 de febrero de 2006
- *Mis muertos, tus muertos, nuestros muertos*, El País, 24 de noviembre de 2008
- *Maestras de escritores*, Claves no 198
- *W. G. Sebald: Un encuentro*

Interviews TV & Radio

Radio

- *Un idioma sin fronteras - Nuria Amat presenta 'Amor y Guerra'*, Radio exterior de España
- *Nuria Amat nos presenta Amor y Guerra*, Onda Cero
- *Entrevista a l'escriptora Núria Amat*, Cadena Ser Catalunya

Televisión

- *Núria Amat ens presenta l'edició en castellà d'Amor i Guerra*, 8 al dia, 8TV
- *Núria Amat descobreix a 'Amor i Guerra' la cara oculta de l'assassí de Leo Trotski*, BTV

