



Lamento

Madame Nielsen

trans. *Gaye Kynoch*

Winner of an English PEN Translates Award

Lamento is a love story that questions the possibility of reconciling the magic of infatuation with everyday life. The story begins with a fire – an image which permeates the novel. The narrator, a writer, meets a theatre artist; their love feels ecstatic and utopian, completely untouched by the outside world.

But with the birth of a child, the weight of the everyday turns their passion destructive. The woman fights for every minute she can to write, while the man abandons family life to focus on his art. Their private drama is further confronted by the jagged realities of colonialism and injustice, forcing them to see themselves as part of a violent history they cannot escape. As love turns to hate, we follow their restless search to understand the enigma of love.

In a startling act of reverse auto-fiction, *Madame Nielsen* – a legendary figure of the Danish avant-garde – inhabits the voice of the woman she once loved to interrogate the man she once was. The result is an unsparing reconciliation of gender and memory, a lament that strips away self-pity to expose the narcissistic cost of creative obsession, and a meditation on how gender alters our experience of the world.



MADAME NIELSEN is a novelist, artist, performer, world history enactor, composer, chanteuse – and multi-gendered. In a previous life christened as Claus Beck-Nielsen in 1963 in Tønder, Denmark, she and her ancestors are the authors of numerous literary works. A pioneer of ‘performative biographies’ and ‘Scandinavian autofiction’, the artist declared the death of Claus Beck-Nielsen in 2001, published *Claus Beck-Nielsen (1963–2001): A Biography*, followed by *The Suicide Mission*, reappeared in 2013 and continues to work as Madame Nielsen. They were thrice nominated for the Nordic Council Literature Prize, *The Endless Summer* became Madame Nielsen’s international break-through and was a bestseller in Germany. Her work has been translated into nine languages.

GAYE KYNOCH is a translator from Danish to English, with nearly 30 years’ experience translating books, essays and articles on topics related to history and the arts, in addition to theatre plays and works of fiction.

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‘A love story close to perfection... Sublime, virtuoso, and terrifying.’

– *Berlingske*

‘Nielsen, the great Danish author, finds a beguiling language for love, hate and everything in between.’

– *Welt am Sonntag*

‘a most unusually worldly and wise novel, a call to embrace the everyday with love.’

– *Dagbladenes Bureau*

‘A beautiful elegy most wonderfully written... Moods and sensations transmit themselves to the reader’s flesh, while the question of love continues to burn.’

– *Politiken*

‘A first-person novel about how it may have been to be married to the man she once was. *Lamento* is a genuinely sorrowful book... both self-obsessed and self-tormenting.’

– *Information*

ABOUT PROTOTYPE

Founded in 2019, Prototype is a publisher of fiction, poetry, anthologies and interdisciplinary projects. With an emphasis on producing unique and beautiful books, we are committed to creating new possibilities in publishing and championing the work of new and established voices in contemporary literature.

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Other recent poetry collections include *rock flight* by Hasib Hourani, a Poetry Book Society Recommendation, Imogen Cassels’ acclaimed debut collection *Silk Work*, and Bhanu Kapil’s *Incubation: a space for monsters*, in its first UK edition. Previously, we published *Journeys Across Breath*, the first volume of collected poems by Stephen Watts, and Lucy Mercer’s debut collection *Emblem*, which was the Poetry Book Society’s Summer Choice for 2022, and Lavinia Singer’s collection *Artifice*.