

Passing her House

The house she nested in
became her,
unfurled around her
like a summer tree.
You can't pass by
that much desired but
costly new conservatory
without imagining she
still presides there,
tortured for hours
in her sadistic wheelchair,
but working quietly
among her pots and jars,
as if her brush were
walking through,
not painting flowers.

Was there some pheromone
her need unconsciously
released that drew
the needy to her? Who
came to care stayed
to be cared for. In Durham
she was queen-
creator of the hive's
heart, collector of humour's
nectar, conjurer
of sunlight out of gloom.
Her tools of rule
by telephone
were other people's lives;
they loved her for
not leaving them alone.

Those ziggurats of red
defiant shoes,
that dyed bright copper hair.
She laid her champagne tastes
for piquant news,
for waterlight and strawberries,
for art that makes necessity
its gesso, love that makes
necessity its pleasure
over the private badlands
of her agonies.
How long, carissima,
before the house you were
forgets you?
Before I pass
forgetting to remember?

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