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BOOK OF SINS

كتاب الخطايا

ספר החטאים

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BOOK OF SINS

N i d a a K h o u r y

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HOUSE OF NEHESI PUBLISHERS
P.O. Box 460
Philipsburg, St. Martin
Caribbean

WWW.HOUSEOFNEHESIPUBLISH.COM

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ISBN: 9780913441992

LC Control Number: 2008932763

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*To anyone who feels a stranger in his home,
and alone though surrounded by family*

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>ix</i>
EMBERS OF THE WATER	1
Altar of Freedom	3
Communion	6
Her Street Becalmed	7
Rites	8
Porthole to the East	11
Secret	12
Longing	13
Sunflowers	14
Twilight in Your Ears	15
River of Shadow	16
MAP OF FLAMES	17
Don't Know	19
Wilderness	20
Piercing	21
The Earth Rained Us Down to Land	22
Crawling Ants	24
Like a Bird Slaughtered	26
Murmuring	28
Pulse of Fire	29
The Time is Over	30
Rebellion	32
Burning Body	33
Station	34
A Gospel According to Rage	35
The Spiraling Finale	37
The Earth is a Gypsy	38
Grapes of Deception	40

THE NAKED WOODCHOPPER	41
In the Name of Love	43
Wooden Chair	44
Night	45
Offering	46
Like a Sad Tree	47
Dynasty	48
Meaning of the End	49
Female	50
The Hyssop Bride	51
Sacrament	52
Nude	53
Without a Sound	54
Church Bell	55
Women Believe	56
Hour of Worship	58
STRUGGLE OF THE WHITE	59
Rooms Unbuttoned	61
Beds of Rain	62
Seven Heavens	63
Do You Know?	65
White	67
Back to My Black Suitcase	68
Altar of Time	69
A Little More Life	70
Cry	71
Dare Not Write	72
The Sugar's Ululation	74
Frolic of the Grave	75
Portal to the Orient	76
<i>About the author</i>	82

INTRODUCTION

After many decades of neglect, and sometimes outright derision, writing by Arab and Palestinian women has begun to find its permanent place on the cultural map of the Arab world. There is now available more work by Arab women writers and poets than ever before. Novels, poetry, autobiographies, journalistic writing, and memoirs have not only given us great reading pleasure, but also have opened to the Arab women a new consciousness of their place in the world. These works contain the trials and triumphs of Arab women's experience and lead us to understand that women's drive to control their lives is not some kind of modern cultural aberration, but a long and continuing desire for social emancipation and self-determination.

One of the major exponents of modernist Arab women writing is the Palestinian poet Nidaa Khoury. Khoury was born in the Galilee village of Fassuta. She is the author of seven poetry collections published in Arabic in Israel, Lebanon and Egypt. Khoury's poems are underpinned by several major themes that characterize her art throughout her poetic career. What is common to all poems is that they spring from an innate poetic faculty. Indeed, the exquisite purity of Khoury's style and her transparent sincerity are further reasons why her poetry altogether escapes the taint of artificial versifying.

In traditional Arabic aesthetics, the poet (*al-Sha'ir*) is "the one who senses," or, as defined by the celebrated poet-critic, Ibn Rashīq, "the poet is someone who perceives things that other people cannot," a view that encouraged the notion that the poet was born, not made; that the poetic gift was the consequence of inborn rather than acquired qualities; not that certain skills did not have to be acquired, but that the spark