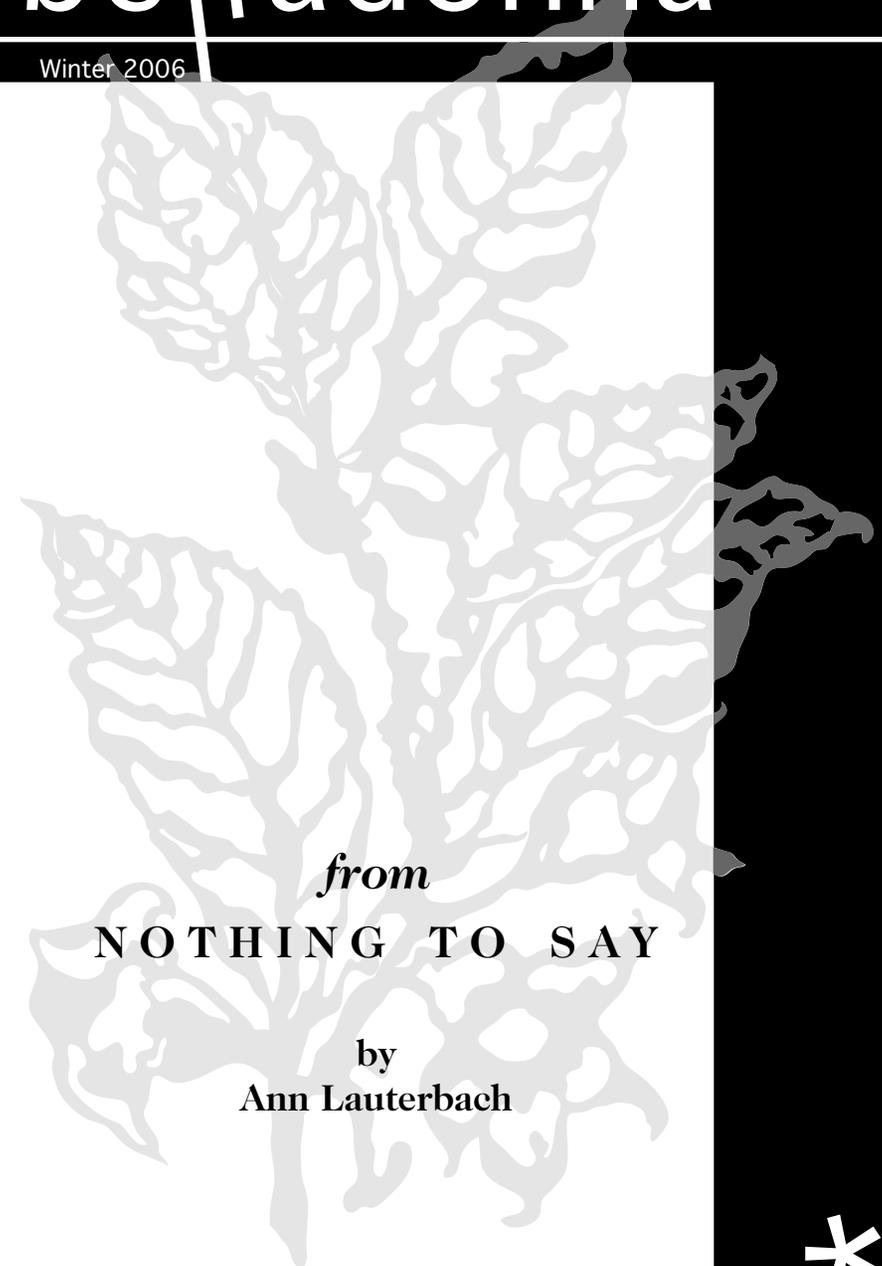


Winter 2006



from
NOTHING TO SAY

by
Ann Lauterbach



belladonna* books

458 Lincoln Place, Suite 4B Brooklyn, NY 11238

www.belladonnaseries.blogspot.com



deadly nightshade, a cardiac and respiratory stimulant, having purplish-red flowers and black berries

from **NOTHING TO SAY**

by
Ann Lauterbach

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belladonna* production and design, Bill Mazza.
It is set in Geneva, ITC Calson Medium and Bold, and ITC Officina Sans.

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belladonna* is a reading series that promotes the work of women writers who
are adventurous, experimental, politically involved, multi-form, multi-cultural,
multi-gendered, impossible to define, delicious to talk about, unpredictable,
dangerous with language.

Rachel Levitsky and Erica Kaufman, editors, belladonna* books.
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Checks payable to Rachel Levitsky.

Violent chronology

pressed into muteness

the coward and the clown

error migrates

terror into the terrain

saturated, static, blown apart

In the film she is

writing in a journal as the landscape goes by

undated

We are in Rock Springs; between two box cars I can see what is undoubtedly Main Street, with an attorneys office, an appliance warehouse and a JJ Newberrys. (Long freight train) Houses on top of a bluff. It has been weeks and weeks since I have seen a landscape that might be green! (The conductor just advised us that we are required to wear shoes while on board!) Now muddy flats have appeared, but the color is still this grayish ochre, very pale, with darker tufts of what must be sagebrush. Passing now a field of mobile homes as the train swerves. The landscape changes and changes, closing up and then opening, flattening down and then rising in these peculiar dune-like shapes; one ahead has a sheer drop, completely straight, or so it seems from this angle. We are riding tandem with a highway now. The sun is lowering. The train is very quiet. We're in a sort of gorge, curving and curving. It is incredible, really, to imagine persons on horseback coming through here, and the Indians! Do I only imagine the sense of expedient squander this vista conjures; its human waste? Did Americans begin to develop this sense of moving through, moving across, moving on, because of the harshness and endlessness of this terrain? (White trucks that say "Covenant Transport" on them.) This cliff I mentioned earlier is now evident: very impressive, roughly incised, reddish rock. The train is about to stop; I think I will get out and have a sniff at the dusty air.

"I have nothing to say and am saying it"

– John Cage

from below the level of sense letting it

rise up

to include

incident and version, things forgotten like the shells of sea creatures on the ocean floor which are every now and then churned up and tossed out onto the beach to dry in the sun and then be picked up by a young girl to put in a box on her dresser where she keeps her collection. Some translucent gold the shape of a toenail, and some opaque white and some speckled like a flicker's back, some so small they are nearly imperceptible, snails and whorls all the more perfect and wondrous for being minute. It is important to remember that forgetting is not the only form of loss, although in the current climate of fabrication and false allegations to be vigilant, keeping the facts intact.

From a distance, the ruptured train looked like a carnival, with the exaggerated welter of vivid color and apparent disarray, ephemera as if cast from an exuberant parade. The fact that the journey had been torn apart and the travelers sent off to hospitals and graves could not be immediately seen, although soon enough the close-ups of weeping relatives, candles, and draped coffins brought it to focus. Nevertheless, there was a gap, an elision, between these images and their captions, between the ruin of the wreck and the tidy inscriptions of representation, pictorial or linguistic. We speak quite easily about broken hearts, but the image this phrase conjures is never associated with bleeding, its literal content, because of course the heart, broken or not, goes on beating just the way a clock goes on ticking after we die.

3.

On the next day we would look for the previous day among the remains, the red bucket collecting drops, the body parts strewn into nearby fields of lavender, the pages and stamps and words still fresh, recoverable, easily reassembled into anecdote and news. The constant mild readjustment of expectation or anticipation to retrospection, adjusting the narrative line to accommodate the slight or major changes that curve it away or toward, altering the end which, of course, is not an end at all, merely a punctuation with a circle around it. And then it went this way. And then we followed along until we came to a sign. And then I said good-bye. And then you turned and I thought I saw you smile. And then he got out of the car and saw her in the crowd and called to her and whispered something into her hair. And then he raised the gun to the window and pulled the trigger. So important not to shut the story down and close the book, to let the threads mingle into patterns impossible to dislodge without dismantling the whole fabric, and visible only in certain lights, at a certain distance

not anything

subjective exploration, objective knowledge, position paper, an exhortation to get beyond, or under, the obvious and so nearly always reductive

habit of mind that keeps

from staying inside the contingencies that actually inform every moment so

1.

What? The other side? Now?

Not exactly, but what cannot be underlined or condemned.

This one for example, the fog and the police car sitting in the browning grass, cat dying under the table. "Someone" phones from London talking about the Biedermeier furnishings in his sister's flat on Regent's Hill, or yet

another

hurrying across the path, now stymied, which way the wind blows, which branch, and over, a cloth, impediment to the friend, in the position of that, her own surely omitted but not forgotten, so it becomes

impossible to point or to deny, hurrying into it, arranged along a path, the division between let's say heartbeat and thunder, or the alarm and Mahler's songs closing distance in, or the stones and paper waiting to be inscribed with the arrival at the circle as it curves outward

split open

to reveal

excess of a dream, we who had been speaking mildly to each other
following collapse, sipping tea in the tea-room, there for a time,
sequestered against those others and their meridians on the chart,
it was difficult in this setting to notice, although the waitress was an
actress, her lips scarlet, but this was only the lure of

glamor, toned muscles of the arm, cleft above the thigh. Found
her there again, again walking the horizon, where what was alive and
what not alive almost touched, as moments touch, walking now with her
sister on the other side of the line which is an illusion, the line, not the
sister, she was there, among all the sisters, their chorale in the meadow,
now turning, now following the path

moving along the outskirts, crab-shouldered, distended

her lesions unhealed, her heart, if she has a heart, down to its stone,
allergic to light and the casting shadows both, alert only in the pitch and
trill, the water under the edge seeping into foundations, drip by

unable to find the glass

to peer

the glassy contradiction, infinite regress drip

hovers along an edge like a beetle.

And the morning opens its envelope to find the newborn dead.

or

New York

Kill themselves for that kind of growth

Only

nine

hundred

and

eleven

days

later

millions more dream of owning

have a dream

the dreamspace

near the warmth of the fireplace

And the *final novel*

about to be truants *local* truants

What is this anyway?

black ribbons

quietly in rain

denied

condolences from

a wreath

in Athens

nuclear biological chemical

dog units

beefed up

Nothing to say

coincidence and chance and now

pink

eased from the clouds the rodents continue south

headless, tail less

and to where and to where and to where?

Dallas or

Russia

Meanwhile I will think a little in the middle. Think the day has a swan in it, long-necked and idle. Think without the lingering kiss, its small, slight partition. Think of the suspense of stages as you mount the stair, of the architecture spawned in mud in a thicket of thorns, of how the literal always squanders its chance. Think that the heart is cut out of cloth and the cloth decorated with cut-out hearts. Think how this would lead to thinking about the heart's own factory

or how hindered speech is condoned as appropriation, the progress of gardens

off to the side.

Think this

as Haiti flames

or the sense that what was full is

now spliced

so that air rummages along draining familiar branches

ill-defined, but connected to a massive halt, cascade laminated, crowd stymied at the fence, and the memorized agenda begins to falter and decay, heaved up along the barricade.

Sleep turned to wakefulness, a kind of bag

carrying night, all its profusion, undone and

missing parts of day hauled across, partial tunes and burned flags, torn wrappings, murky teas, faces of the newly dead masking faces of the newly born, the beloved loping at the crest, pockets bulging with tissues, keys and plans.

By morning the bag
broken, spilling its shade.
Said that. Nothing to say.

The body, now light-headed and limp, is there, is an odd circuit, slight pressure, slight nausea and fatigue, so it wants to curl up, sexless, lie down in the grass like a cat. A sense of debris, nothing useful, scraps, leavings, odd dry bits, like the white mineral residuum at the bottom of a kettle, bottle caps and pits and shreds of lettuce caught in the drain.

The rebuke of mild air.
The rebuke of the following day.

It seemed a rival course had spawned a rival destiny from countermeasures and hopscotch moves, the players scattering into the woodlands and down the banks toward the river, now breaking into chunks of ice. Beyond, the bluegray mountains spread along the haze, ancient sea beasts asleep on the rim.

And in the cavern where the dream reeled out, its images flickering on stone, the old hall was covered with bright moss, and the courtyard wired up along its fence, and the sister unpacked pictures with new captions, and the boy tossed a crumpled twenty on the kitchen tile.

Open on the counter, it read “the lovers, the invalids, and the socialites” just before she opened the invitation

to join them at dinner immediately following.

There were two cats, the one with a kind of staple in its fur, smallish and wild, and the other, already dead. And so the dead and not dead gathered in the building in the dream, the building also now only in dream, static in memory by day, alive at night.

2.

Sound, what are you?

Over there

slight

nothing to say

happening now the full-take performance: sky roped in deep pink with purple interior crest so what like a down vest smaller rodent clouds moving south train many dead in Madrid so what the long humped mountains soon to disappear behind the green spring green

Millions in Madrid in the pouring

rain faces