

BELLADONNA *2011 #126

BELLADONNA* PROSE EVENT



Untitled #5

Vanessa Place

9 789123 443765
UNTTLED 5 /PLACE.V
04/24/14
9789123443765
List Price: \$
221 / 2 Our Price: \$5.00

BELLADONNA* COLLABORATIV

925 Bergen Street, Suite 405, Brooklyn, NY 11238

belladonnaeries@gmail.com

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

Untitled #5

Vanessa Place

Enter COUNTESS LOVEFACE with Servant girl. Servant girl carries tray of cups and tea cakes. Second servant girl trails with teapot.

Countess Lovelace Where there's less and more, the mind suffers not from ingurgitation, but from the mutiny of disorder, sour malice is untempered by sweet merey, rank envy ungraded with esteem, but each cause itself added or subtracted, not by its compliment, but by souped chance, leading to the riotous sense of effects bereft of sense. Resolve, sans resolution. And this indeterminate way is neither less nor more, but pudding-shallow proof of the conglomerate nonce. An ill-suited, but most familiar, habit much being no more.

Countess Lovelace sits to the right of EP, leaving Lord Tollbooth to his left. First servant girl places the tray before her lady, the second waits.

Lord T. The lease of the lesser, as it were.

Countess L. There's lavender and lemon, Dundee, and, I believe, saffron.

Lord T. Saffron — by my divine substance of despised show —

EP Pardon, Madame. You disconsole by subtraction, vex by addition, then would withhold all comforting balance, ladyship, from your false equation, for nowhere is there where all oppositions are so swannishly matched, in both degree and summation. It is unnatural to demand so little and so much from any nature. Is that Eccles cake?

Countess Lovelace nods as Servant girl cuts a square of pale purple cake.

Countess L. I'll reckon Nature settles this account, Monsieur, as it is most unnatural for a world not to posit its opposite — young to old, day to night, rare gold to base ore. Father to lawyer, mirrors proving mirror. If there be inequity in any form or every number, it needs lie within your own disproportionate eye.

EP Precious spendthrift: If I tally sin for saint, or note how a moon shines at noon, I'll soon show it's little but more than this rude heap and clotted transformations.

EP nods, accepting a cup from Servant girl. Second servant fills it up. He sugars the tea, veiling it in milk.

Lord T. At last, a point of agreement! Pinching a corner off a Mr. Kipling's French Fancy, the pink, don't you know, the one Lil had her eye on, the selfish, well, they can't keep them then, can they, once the house was swimming in orchids, and someone said how clever, how they just wouldn't keep, no matter what they did, how ever did she manage it, they said, and herself laughed, saying how there's no keeping anything worth being kept, and no getting rid of what ought be lost, something about decoration and garbage and caught in between, Lucky, I said, later, that his Hon. didn't hear her, though he might agree, I reckon, Shush said Lil, do you want her to hear you now, How, says I, for wall's heaven't ears or apples oranges, no more than masters, all that's heard is what wants hearing, la même chose, don't you know, Faith, if it's truth she's after, there's plenty who'll flatter her, including them right there in her own mind, they sleep ever so sound, the traitorous chorus, besides, says I, it's the way of the world, darling, nothing personal, dearie,

and Lil begins to cry, she conceited, for wouldn't you suspicion that she's the knees, oh, it's the very latest, thinking there's a difference between that that is and that what ain't, too many soft-covered romances, girls changing stations like life were a Chinese tram, too many sweepy motion pictures, girls caught moorish and cliffside awaiting their great ticklebrained man, stupid, I says, the stupid, for who's she when she's not at home? I'll learn you, she says, that'll be the day, I says, conceited, she says, conceited, I says. [Exit servant.]

Countess L. If you are not guilty, then who?

EP Who?

Lord T. Who killed Smith, sir, who?

EP Fate's fait, your Grace. Men who, by fortune's dint or folly, grow great, will harden, turning to stone, or brighten to shallow public brass, the greatest do melt to pale marble before they evaporate, their clear veins cool and immortal, and, as goes the greater, so would the lesser — inevitability puppets puppets.

Convenience, disagreed Lord T, and Countess Lovelace added that as the major premise is presumed without exception, though the minor be ever so contingent, the common cause is oft — and rightly so — obscured by the particular, so Smith's impersonal fortunes, like his names, were overshadowed by their felicitous authority. It stands, that is, she said, but does not follow.

(A posteriori ≠ a priori.)

Who killed Smith? Lord Tollbooth thought that the murderer thought that he could frame EP, there was motive and design, all that was missing from the picture was opportunity. Which, of course, our assassin could not have foreseen. Are you with me so far? It was the perfect set-up, fellas, except there was one small flaw — fate. It was fate that got in fate's way that fateful day. Who

killed Smith? It was a small question, like the man himself, but a large principle. He ate a vanilla fancy.

Countess L. You are as well a large principle, and have spawned a number of principalities. Seven, it is rumored, to date.

Lord T. Well-rumored and dated. Two more will even out my squad of angels.

Count L. That's odd—

EP Sí — bastards to angels is strange alchemy.

Lord T. So carpenters turn to kings, sir, sanctifying thieves, fortuitously hung. Guilt plus innocence becomes purity which most becomes the most guilty. Am I correct, dear lady, on this account?

Countess L. As a sum it is concrete.

Lord T. And me full of fancy, and you fancy-free. Between us, sir, hangs truth.

Countess L. Enough. These are jacks you're dancing across your palm and we are talking of swinging a man.

EP As am I, your ladyship, and I pray you set this Jack to dancing, for by my footloose swinging, you will suit me for eternity; the circle slipped round my neck will halo the pluck of my heavenly wings, and win me a glorious harp strung with the smooth strings of a martyr's alabaster heart.

Countess L. You ask to die —

EP — I demand it.

Countess L. The state would do you justice —

EP — I expect justice from the state.

Countess L. You would be free. There are witnesses who exonerate.

EP Such release weighs about the hands and feet, and shackles the freer spirit.

Lord T. [*To COUNTESS L.*] It is the mark of the true citizen to suffer his suffrage. [*To EP*] You are a fool. Life charges no man so innocent that he begs for a slaver. I believe our angel has an angle.

EP Aye, and two more of me shall set ye free.

Lord T. For two more of you, I'd angle to the river, for scum.

EP That runs with milk and wine, and makes light of dross, and dross of light.

Lord T. Beware the angler in the dark lake.

Countess L. If three angles equal be, then (only) may we speak of trinities. Yours is not so commensurate.

EP Yet. But give me due, Countess, and I'll prove my coordinates. Kill me, and have the first measure of your—that is to say, my — divinity.

Lord T. It's a grating score, sir. You take great punishment.

EP No, lordship. Great reward.

Countess L. On whose account, sir?

EP On yours and yours.

Countess L. You favor us with ours, sir, but ought not spend them on our minutes.

Enter GOOSE and SECRETARY shackled, with PETER LOMBARD, a guard.

Secretary [To GOOSE.] What's old blickum jawin'?

Goose [To SEC.] Eccles cake, for the discerning palate.

Sec. Never heard on it.

Go. And you never will again, brother, for they's wakes in those cakes.

Sec. How do you figure?

Go. Pagan doings. Aloysius, hostel rights moist and meaty, yeasty, coupled with the cogitations of Divine Providence and the promissory mystery of the two-legged hairless! Arise, by John!

Peter L. Great Scrap! Would you two not shut up!

Sec. Shot up, blue belly, I have, and I'd've done the same again, if there were a dropped dime in it.

Go. In it or by it, you'd genuflect in a pissoir, praying for a nickle's change.

Sec. Sez you!

Go. I do.

Peter L. Can it! [To LORD T.] All apologies, Your Watt — dead men talkin' —

Go. [to SEC.] That's their motto. "The secret dies with me..."

Sec. Whose motto?

Go. The cake-bakers.

Sec. Them's bakers? And me in my bonaroots!

Peter L. Stuff it or I'll abhor you! [To COUNTESS L.] So sorry, My Worship, they're a couple of flapjacks, flipping when one's side's done to do the other likewise, to a turn, in the fashion. The old one writ his way in and would right out — caught the State uninformed, pants round its plebian knees. They say his histories, be they ever so chuffed, bullbolts, ah, rightly said, Peter, stink enough of truth to warrant the high punitives, brazen, not to put too fine a point on it, and the Government, like all true felons, hates an unfettered jury, runaway, as the burghers say, though its thataway that puts them of a mind to shout Out! Aie. But mum's the word, ah, isn't it just, on true verdicts, them that socks the here in hereafter, all equal measure to remedial account. So the accommodating one's likewise caged crabbed confessions from those he's spouted for, and he'll pay trumpet as well as the others — cooked from both sides, they are, your Wellsprung, the consummators, clean-pricked as a pig's squeak, and yet —

Countess L. Be brief. Why you them to me?

Peter L. Brief, yes, lawyerly, as it were, in essence and form. And not by half stands the whole, for to be brief, so to the pork, the meat, so to the esse, to summarize, like the sun, ah, 'tis poetic, I'll grant you, not Romantic, but lyric, sweet lyric, creeping in on her little tattled feet, busy poetry, coupleting like the honeymoon, 'tis the sum, that is, in res — in brief, that is, in haiku, I've an order here somewheres, a big order, with much small writing, and there's staples and a stamp, it's certified, in a quick word, Your Dires, to mean something — ah, here it is — would you like me to read it to you? I've spectacles here, somewhere — short, yes, sweet, yes, to be brief, to summarize the epic limbs and untoward riches, yes, yes, and yes, and in proportionate, yet modest, sum —

Lord T. There's a fever to that man's timbre. [Gives money.] Thank you the same.

Peter L. Are you sure? I've a lovely manner. Sonorous, it's said.

Sec. [To Go.] Which's sonny?

Go. Who's Sonny?

Sec. Right. Whose bitch's Sonny?

Go. No one's. It's *sonorous*.

Sec. Then it's s'own bastard, for I'll have none of him, and there's no man going to carry us on his own echoed increase. It's unnatural evil, this imitate son.

Go. Nature's not in it.

Sec. Then it's us, by ten inches.

Lord T. Be quiet then, for I cannot contract my attention.

Countess L. Perfect Peter, please instruct your charges on the ways of nature.

Peter L. Spectacles. Atop the head. I'll be blocked headless one day — pardon, My Lamps, the natural way, you did say? Well it is to be briefer still, there's the getalong manner of all men, to be charged one minute, sentenced the next, hung in the third. There's always the three, don't you see, there's the hope in it — come the come again — though sometimes there's pardon, another form of resurrection, to be sure —

Countess L. That which is necessary and sufficient, but no more. Include, if you will, jailor, the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final. A single sentence each, as can be served by one man.

Peter L. Cosh or caught?

Countess L. Sans violence, si vous plaît. *Contra-fait*.

Sec. Counterfeit? If I had the talent. Knew a good drawer once, though too small-time, fives, he did, tens too, kept him

in Cheetos and cigarettes, but never made a killing. Present company accepted, of course.

EP Thank you.

Peter L. It's counterfactual, you codfaced hog. I'd smash you to your sneakers if it weren't for the lady's intercession.

Lord T. Material, sir?

Peter L. Why the hand at hand. Heavy, sir, hard as a hammer.

Lord T. Formal?

Peter L. The swing of my arm, sir, swift and sure as a meteor.

Lord T. Efficient?

Peter L. The rock upon which justices were erect — Peter, sir.

Lord T. And finally?

Peter L. Finally?

Go. Finally!

Peter L. Finally, sir — and too briefly — hammer, meteor, rock — He who hews heaven from hearth authors this heaving Argument —

Go. *De profundus non curat lex*.

Sec. There it is. We're surrounded, boys. Tell Tojo the gibbit's up, heads're gonna roll.

Lord T. [Re: PETER L.] His grasp of history's too porous.

Sec. Too porous, sir? It cannot be to porous to my mind, for there's no one here that'll bewail the loss of an après-de-camp or beweeep Scrooge's gift goose. Poor us and more poor us, that's how I sees it.

Lord T. The man is a sponge.

Go. And the sponge is father to the man, if I've any grasp of design intelligent.

Countess L. Then remove you to the chapel and pray for your mute souls, that it might yet sing, like the nightingale, and then til morning, listening for a miracle. For only by articulated benediction will you live to witness tomorrow's twilight.

Sec. Pardon the interruption, but what about me?

Countess L. Single nature, double name: if two are one, there is yet hope of a mereiful trinity.

Lord T. Though it is advised not to make a tragedy out of an epic, so that one ending ought not resolve so many. It is unlikely. Too cinematic.

Countess L. Yet there are many which happen contrary to probability.

Sec. I'll buy! Let me have benediction and in-patient treatment and in twenty-eight day you'll get a model citizen, suitable for framing. I'll be full of pomp as Mutti's apple pie, stuffed with guilt as a Midas goose, I'll strut bantam-style, with a Yankee's Chinese cockadoodle, I'll roger the suburbs the English way, and still, all in all, I will stay, un-unutterable in the American way.

Go. [*Aside.*] He is commendable to our faults. See how they hesitate to have him die.

Sec. I'll be circumspect as a Christian in a pickle factory — once tipped, twice shy, even if there's preservation nearby.

Go. Amen, brother!

Lord T. Is this blasphemy?

Peter L. It's a fresh stink, in brief.

Sec. Can a heart stink? Can a human heart, that quick and perfect root that lobs left to right from that first bolt of day to that last blank night, that lifts the lid that belies the breast in steady gentle sleep, that fuels the culpable dreams of maidens and the innocent slumber of felons, that ongoing going muscle that pounds strong in fear, strong in hate, strongest in righteous anger, that trembles only at love, undone by its best doing, that groans as it grows, by swelling, by joy, sir, and under grief's ivory grip, that anchor-weighted memory that is Time's light and careless thief, whose strings pluck and unpluck according to music unheard, that chamber pot in which each mortal measure tinkles and trills, yet remains a metronome, a human heart, sir, polestar of saints, censor of sinners, precious ruby, doting daughter, Duracell son, where seats the mystery of the mirror and the Making, or can this incandescence stink, sir?

Go. — Riper still — Careful, they'll cut open a window.

Countess L. It's a clumsy postscript, but heartfelt.

Lord T. Yes, he seems sincere in his own salvation.

Countess L. Then let us pray for its contagion. Take them, Mr. Lombard, away.

Peter L. Far away, Countess? I should like that. For if I take them far enough, it will be far enough, but no further, and if I take them farther, it would not be far enough for being so much farther. There is my argument. [*To Audience.*] There are two types of argument, Aristotelian and Rogerian. From one, one, from the other, many. There are two types of argument, inductive and deductive, Butler and Badiou. The can and the can't, as the French say. There is argument by example, general to specific; argument by analogy, similarity — confusion, in respect — providing warrant; argument from sign, the inferential is, pucked, like taffeta and mortality; from cause, that sly effect of geometry; from testimony, that which is sworn to be swan-true; and from

narrative, the telling tale told. And truth be told, there is the movement in all argument from claim to grounds to warrant, which gives me prime authority to arrest.

Countess L. Away is enough.

Sec. I'll confess — I'm confused.

Go. We're to be kept sub rosa — in the hole.

Sec. Whoo! I should certainly hope so.

Go. Ad scg, you witless frog.

Sec. Frog? You'll croak first, you jailhouse lowyer, embraced I am with faint favor, while they kiss you for savoir and with such kisses, mister, coffins are sealed.

Go. And rocks set aside. Bark away, maggot. I'd more worry about being nailed if I were you. Deus hic —

Peter L. Up and enough! — and far away. [*Exeunt all.*]

Untitled #5 © Vanessa Place 2011

This work first appeared in *Lamination Colony*.

Belladonna* Chaplet #126 is published in an edition of 126--26 of which are numbered and signed by the author, in commemoration of her performance on February 4, 2011 at the Hamiltonian Gallery in Washington D.C. alongside Bhanu Kapil and Eileen Myles. This marks the first installation of PROSE EVENT an ongoing series curated by Kate Zambreno, for Belladonna* Collaborative.

Belladonna* is an event and publication 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.

The 2011 Belladonna* Chaplet Series is designed by Bill Mazza.

Chaplets are \$4 (\$6 signed) in stores or at events, \$7 (\$9 signed) for libraries/institutions.

To order chaplets or books, please make checks payable to Belladonna Series, and mail us at: 925 Bergen Street, Suite 405, Brooklyn, New York 11238. Please add \$2 for postage for the first chaplet, plus .50c for each additional chaplet in a single order.

You can also see more information on each book and order online:
www.BelladonnaSeries.org