



# The Night Sky: Writings on the Poetics of Experience

By Ann Lauterbach

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## The Night Sky: Writings on the Poetics of Experience By Ann Lauterbach

In her six collections of poetry, Ann Lauterbach has won acclaim for poems that explore the ways in which language simultaneously omits and defines our experience of reality. Lauterbach's dazzling range of formal strategies, her search for methods that engage contemporary issues of identity, event, and description extend to her prose writings, collected for the first time in *The Night Sky: Writings on the Poetics of Experience*. At the center of this new book are a series of seven essays, originally written in the mid-1990s, which engage the interstices between poetics, politics, and memoir. Lauterbach advocates an active engagement with language, at once imaginative, philosophical, and practical; these writings demonstrate a radical relationship between how and what we know. By turns meditative and polemical, lyrical and descriptive, they argue for the centrality of art in a democratic society.

Also included in this wide-ranging collection are brilliant, provocative essays on Whitman and Emerson, illuminating remarks on poets Fanny Howe, Michael Palmer, Rosmarie Waldrop, and Barbara Guest, as well as considerations of artists David Smith, John Currin, and Joe Brainard.

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### Editorial Review

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A new book of poems and an essay collection showcase the subtle and philosophical work of a rarefied yet captivating poet.

In *Hum*, Lauterbach taps into both the sensual and the cerebral aspects of consciousness. Her exquisite lyric poems are like lacework, netting feeling and thought, and embodying the inner flickering of light and dark, presence and absence. As Lauterbach gambols between sense and sensibility, elusiveness and lucidity, she sketches a poetic universe similar in topography and weather to that of Stevens and Ashbery. She meditates on the music of Mahler and the art of Botticelli and Gerhard Richter, and, like a particle accelerator, her whirling poems atomize experience. In her most focused and moving poems, Lauterbach, like so many writers, including Jorie Graham in *Overlord* (2005), traces the concussive emotional effects of 9/11.

The nimble and glimmering essays in *The Night Sky* offer many insights into Lauterbach's life and poetics. She writes of her journalist father's early death. She muses on the nature of myth, and the difference between information and knowledge. She does write of stars and constellations and the dark, but for all the wonder of the sensuous, she confides that for many poets "language is the material of the world." It is a pleasure to see the forthright and communal side of Lauterbach, the side, one imagines, that inspires her to teach; the source, too, of her gracefully articulate arguments on behalf of poetry and all of art. And how perceptively she marvels over the vitality of today's poetry in spite of its utter neglect by society-at-large, and how eloquently she concludes that art is crucial to living a "life well spent" and to the well-being of a democratic society.

*Donna Seaman*

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### Review

The mystery and longing in [Ann Lauterbach's] work, the wit and heart are the things we feel on our skin. --  
*Don DeLillo*

### Review

"Showcases the subtle and philosophical work of a rarefied yet captivating poet."

-*Booklist*

"To read *The Night Sky* is to take a privileged walk with a beautifully intellectual poet through the garden of poetry."

-*Beloit Poetry Journal*

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