

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Michelle Bitting: Four Poems

Michelle Bitting · Wednesday, June 1st, 2016

Michelle Bitting has work published in *The American Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Narrative*, *diode*, *Rattle*, *the Paris-American*, *L.A. Weekly*, *Linebreak* and others. Poems have appeared on *Poetry Daily* and as the Weekly Feature on *Verse Daily*. Her book *Good Friday Kiss* won the DeNovo First Book Award and *Notes to the Beloved* received a starred [Kirkus Review](#) as did her brand new title: *The Couple Who Fell to Earth* from C & R Press. Poems have been nominated for Pushcart and Best of the Net prizes. Michelle has taught poetry in the U.C.L.A. Extension Writer's Program, at Twin Towers prison with a grant from Poets & Writers Magazine and is an active California Poet in the Schools. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Pacific University, Oregon and is completing a PhD in Mythological Studies at Pacifica Graduate Institute. Visit her at: www.michellebitting.com. You can purchase her books here: [C&R Press](#).

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The Couple Who Fell to Earth

We went flying without a map
 as naked astronauts often do.
 The borders of our bodies
 blended into one, an erosion
 of planets and vaporized stars,
 we hurtled through space
 and burned up entering.
 Please forgive this clumsy beauty,
 no more than grains of dust,
 moon debris, a streak of light.
 We land and make a circle,
 a cornucopia in the crop
 and the heat of our hips
 bores down, carving a cradle,
 the perilous pit,
 the stone fruit heart
 of human fire. The body
 loves what it loves
 and we can't stop it;

we become an O around,
 we become the snake itself,
 the rosetta coil, the upper room.
 We are flag and stigmata,
 the ship set sail, the smoking
 orifice, the holy divot
 and buried cup. Lips
 to each other's eyes,
 we will seal our demons in,
 the flowering trees
 and muddy gardens
 of our Eden-scorched mouths. Crowns
 tossed to the breeze,
 the honeycomb bleeding gold
 and queen's poison darts.
 We have watched
 the fountain grass,
 felt their glowing spines
 shoot through us,
 the mournful wheat heads
 made of glass
 trace a cross
 on the cistern tomb.
 And to think we slept
 through it all, though
 the dream kept smacking us
 with every surge
 of the sea's cold blade.
 We are the lion
 and the lamb, the tooth
 in the flesh, flaming halo
 and silken curl,
 the wounded bird
 and coming ecstasy,
 this kingdom we've built
 till death do us part.

~ previously on *Narrative*

Lupercalia

The ides of February are brutal.
 Love's sticky sentiments
 gumming up the air
 make it harder
 to breathe. Gilded truffles
 snug in their cellophane tombs

dare you to pluck them
from underworlds
and eat. Hearts dangle
in pharmacy windows
pretending to pump real red.
Brutal for a boy who feels
but won't say
what it is to be sixteen
and never one secret admirer,
never a glitter doily
or silver Hallmark
waxed with lipstick's
smoky kisses. What ghost
can this mother conjure?
What diaphanous caress?
When in Rome
and if long ago, I could run
naked through alley ways,
my breasts swinging
like fevered trolls,
like devil bells bared,
tolling resident evil. I could
don a goat-skin cap,
carry my pot
of flames to the desert,
burn salted meal-cakes
with vestal virgins
and raise them
to the stars,
to dead crows
and broken Caesars. But
it wouldn't change the fact
of his incomplete beauty,
how girls turn away
when he opens his mouth to speak
a sound less than smart.
Won't change the fact
of his gawky bust
and uncommon sense,
an art far too wild
and no longer cradled
in the cave of a darkened living room,
where once we rocked
and he suckled, at times, stopped
to let glide
the nipple from his mouth
and look up at me,
just look at me...

his future,
his mother
and unconditional lover,
his only Valentine.

Because

Because the night belongs to lovers
— Patti Smith

And felines and cat-like
you stalk shadows, unraveling
everything in the house tonight:
bustier lace, dark nipples
of rain, their plum curves
pressed to the window
as the curl of something feral
flirts under curtain. You're
naked, the bed, our boat
and bent over my body's glass,
the moon through the slats
makes milk of its surface,
your tongue to the waves
cast deep as you rise
and the willow groans outside
in a stiff wind. I had no idea
how far down I was,
what igneous caves ran,
flaming orange
in my Barrier Reef, my underworld,
my Mauna Kea,
until you showed me
the mountain head, the raw stone
glowing, my buried gold
giving up its hottest
story—bronze posse
of feminine feet released,
running wild—high grass
and the whole wide land
at once, oh God,
rippling, rippling, rippling.

~ previously on *Linebreak*

Joni Mitchell is not Unconscious!

She hasn't fallen into the coma
 those nasty tabloids suggest
 She's alert and well and sitting up
 in her bed at Cedars Sinai
 I was walking on The Promenade
 in the land of palm trees and Saint Monica
 where sun and blue shade duke it out
 wending a path between bass clef and treble
 and then I saw it: JONI MITCHELL IN A COMA!
 And I said No! Not her! Maybe it's true
 she's been a recluse for half the century
 in her pink Bel-Air mansion
 Our Lady of the Spanish Canyon
 where she chain smokes and is paranoid of everybody
 especially the invisible parasites
 like colorful irritable fibers
 she's convinced bloody her skin
 make her tear all her clothes off
 and slither like wind on ceramic tiles
 Who wouldn't believe aliens
 were camping in your private parts
 when there's Paparazzi spying
 from the Hydrangea everywhere you go?
 There is no rain in California
 and I have been to Hollywood parties
 and done perfectly disgraceful things
 But Joni Mitchell is not unconscious!
 She is still here in the in-between
 going up and down like her melodies
 make us when the heart is shadows and light
 and we are desperate to be forgiven
 Oh Joni keep singing we need that nothing gray about you

~ previously on *Linebreak*

(author photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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