

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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