

# 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](http://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*

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## 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.

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## 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*

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## 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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