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# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Michelle Bitting: Signs and Afterthoughts

Michelle Bitting · Thursday, February 7th, 2013

Michelle Bitting has work published or forthcoming in *The American Poetry Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Narrative*, *Rattle*, *Nimrod*, *River Styx*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *diode*, *Linebreak*, the *L.A. Weekly* and others. Poems have appeared on *Poetry Daily* and as the Weekly Feature on *Verse Daily*.

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## When the Sky Makes a Certain Sign

~ for Dorianne

And a rush of halogen feathers flies out  
from the moon's busted pillow,  
I stand at the edge, Mother  
and the pasture glowing  
between us, a stubbled crater  
stabbed with bells  
and icy nettles, once again,  
begins to melt. A flock  
of seagulls firing up  
the red horizon  
makes our horse much more distinct,  
stomping around her bold  
perimeter, dark as desire. She lifts  
a single delicate ankle  
so I won't recognize the danger,  
her language tucked  
like diamond rooks  
in the shadow of each hoof. She's come  
a long way to find me,  
the night's glass staircase  
ground down  
with rhythmic tramping,  
a quarry of stars  
she's jacked over, rocks glittered,  
the lunatic truth  
and clashing call

of all those clapping, insomniac  
 girls you fought  
 and girls you taught  
 to make the message clear:  
 Every poem's a love poem  
 no matter how weary the world.  
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## Lion Attacking A Horse

~ sculpture, Greek, 325-300 BCE  
 Three tons of porous marble flown high  
 over continents on Getty purse strings  
 after two thousand years parked in Rome.  
 Stallions mauled by noble beasts  
 in Hellenistic worlds were sign  
 of the times: emperors and generals  
 playing God with the little people.  
 Here, we walk in circles under domed atrium light,  
 faint fish aromas whipped in on Malibu sea breezes.  
 The way that lion's claws scrape shady  
 indents in the stallion's stone side,  
 you'd think time had stopped forever,  
 the preyed upon steed stilled  
 by a sculptor's lean chisel. We read how  
 loving mentees of Michelangelo  
 mended severed heads  
 with their fine Renaissance hands.  
 Before that, Circus Maximus lured it home  
 until stairwells of the Palazzo  
 made it mise en scene for the fatally sentenced.  
 Show me an art unstained by blood.  
 So close to your ear, I whisper:  
*There's a poem in here somewhere  
 and I'll kill what I have to to get it.*  
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## The Raised Shade of Morning on the Lower West Side

From what must be the most beautiful view  
 in New York City, you can watch boats unzip  
 the long blue bodice of the Hudson,  
 white boas of churned up feathers dragged  
 in their frothy wake. Cars rush uptown or downtown,  
 east to west, but only one way or the other  
 and you must choose on any given street  
 unless you are a bird: a sparrow, finch,  
 seagull, or ordinary pigeon in which case  
 you can flap and dive and flutter

at whatever height, speed, or aerodynamic  
configuration, sail with the wind or against it  
if you want to get where you are going.  
You are a bird and so above the laws  
of ordinary traffic, of ordinary human.  
What is human is to have a heart  
like a bird that soars and sweeps  
and flickers to the extreme awe  
and consternation of those left standing  
on the dock below, waving their arms  
while the tea in their thermoses  
turns cold. The audacity of flight.  
The fact of the airborne heart,  
that gritty, wet red engine revved  
and releasing itself from the sky's bright palm,  
weaving around the dim side of ships  
and skyscrapers, flower stands and taxi cabs,  
the dread-locked silhouette of a man  
on the corner filling the acapella air  
with a sound lovelier than you could  
ever imagine waking up to this morning,  
the heart, its bent ears shivering,  
the trees in the high park rustling,  
their leafy nests and shadowed landings  
where the heart, for all its regal  
and wildly ecstatic pumping, eventually sleeps.

*We are proud to premiere these poems in Cultural Weekly.*

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