

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*.

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.

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.*

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.

This entry was posted on Thursday, February 7th, 2013 at 5:31 am and is filed under [Poetry](#).
You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can leave a
response, or [trackback](#) from your own site.