

MICHELLE BITTING

Everything Crumbling Becoming Something New

When my baby told me she wanted to be a boy some part of me
had to die slip away like good mourners do politely monk-like the mother
of monasteries drowning myself my crushed head a vat of liquid
smoke tasting like saffron paint letting it choke me taking up the green
knife the Spain in me I was born to slice myself into little infinite
mirror stabs cracked again I'd have to fall on it muffle my cries
rushing wings of birdsong memory the hour's dusky passing my girl
taking off changing form mid-flight misty vestiges shed letting her go
so a son could enter letting it go just as we did your every dress cave of
my closet's harkening skirts and gold-flecked minis the black velvet strapless
poofs of yellow tulle even the blue taffeta from the chic boutique
in the Jewish Quarter where the old Algerian in fedora and double-breasted
suit directed us back to the Seine walking us half way there his simple
kindness wanting to slap myself my American offense offering money
his eyes crushed blossoms where I come from another shade of green
gets worshipped more than being human imagine selling your birthright
America my mess of pottage imagine giving birth all over again
the two of you going through it again child woman now man
all your multitudes I'm learning to sing you little green little shorn-headed hero
your mother an orphan now shrouds for my gone girl my vanity my mirage
a desert of selves boundless and bare we bury ourselves thinking greater than
a shattered visage not you your fledgling harmonies bold your beauty your many
within sometimes sad sometimes scary refrains thank you thank you
for teaching me to listen sounds who knew I no who knew you could make

IVA HLADIS

Blood Type, 2001
Mixed media on recycled wood, 11 1/2 x 11 1/2



COURTESY THE ARTIST