

# New Poetry by Antonio Addessi

## OLD IRONSIDES

she is  
most days  
a ship armed to the chin  
cannons at her sides  
her mast a sea of kelp and urchin

melting down my iron sides  
for ammunition  
she pours me  
hot and slick  
into molds I want to fit  
but cant

what does her  
naked belly show to sea's floor?

I want to see  
I rubber my neck to her sides

only to take in salty sick  
and the brim of her  
matted cap

I pretend I am inside her—  
below deck  
she aches with barrels of cider  
churning into  
drink  
to feed her crew  
I want to be that crew  
get paid little to feed her fuel  
to work the nights  
as the sea works her over

pandering toward open casks of  
sea here  
inlet there  
till we drop anchor

## **FISH IN THE CREEL**

At the end of summer we had a party for you  
do you remember why you didn't show?  
You'd been fishing in central park again  
with your rod and your tackle box.  
You told me you'd use the flies I tied  
the ones I made to look like junebugs.  
You said they were the most cunning things  
you'd seen, that they'd put fish in the creel.  
I had no idea what a creel was and I  
didn't care. I just knew we'd be eating  
fish for dinner and maybe after we ate  
you'd show me your lucky tooth collection.

When you left the apartment I got the neighbors  
to come over and made your favorites—lime jello  
and ants on a log. I waited about three hours, the sun  
had gone and the neighbors left too. That's when  
I heard the phone ring. It was the police. They'd  
found you in the Harlem Meer. You'd caught  
the big one they said, you'd hooked a willow and  
sank thigh deep into the muck. They hung up  
when I asked if they'd bring you home.  
It was late and I had my rollers in.



I hosed you off in the alley. No fish for dinner  
instead we boiled your boot strings. You said  
when you were flopping in the Meer you thought  
a lot about my recipe for bran muffins and  
where I got the hair to tie those flies. I couldn't

bring myself to tell you that hair was mine  
that they may have looked like junebugs but  
they were tiny red-eyed me's destined for  
a mouth or three.

## **ANSWERING MACHINE: APRIL 29th, 1992**

for Rodney King

Rodney. Rodney. If you're there pick up. You haven't answered  
my  
calls for months. I'm worried. This isn't like you. You may be  
in pain  
and that pain is very real but we could talk about it. We  
could get  
lunch Rodney. We could go to Joe Jost and get a pickled egg.  
It's on me. I'll tell my old lady I had to step out, buy some  
smokes.

Remember that night in Monterey when she came down the street  
in her curlers holding that baseball bat? I saw my balls flash  
before  
my eyes and I'd never seen you laugh so hard. She hated you  
because  
you liked the drink. I'm a horrible drunk but I love a good  
story.

Rodney. If we go to lunch you could tell me about the time you  
met  
Larry David in that carpark in West Hollywood. I wish someone  
famous pissed on my door handle. I liked that story and I like  
you.

Always have. What do you say? Those eggs won't stay pickled  
forever.

## **FAMILY TREE**

I come from a long history and as such a lineage entails, it  
started rather far back into  
antiquity. this is important because the past is neither

present in this narrative or  
relevant. it is somewhat disturbed as soil often is because if  
it were undisturbed it would  
be a fossil waiting in vein for the unearthing.

my death began like any other—with my birth. I was, for lack  
of a better word or  
phrase, entangled prolapse of a hemorrhoidic kind.

for I, my heart was beating and my blood did it's gyrating as  
gravity let on to itself and  
the core of the earth(made, they say, of ore, of silken iron)  
pulled me toward it's  
embrace.

this embrace had been stalled for 7 months 8 days and a  
handful of empty bucket nights.

the hole in mom's throat. lump. puss. cyst. anchovies. pizza  
hut.

back seat sister

baby baby amy grant

du-rag

batman shirt

I come from a long line of liars. the kind that look you in  
the eye and say trust me and  
then walk to your house and throw  
themselves on the porch, their hair pasted to an awkward side  
in autumn sneaking out of  
their parents house to kiss you on the mouth.

I misread the signs misspell at the spelling bee uttering  
instead, thinking that I was going  
north. I was so far south that the snow had leapt off the  
pavement, off of the back  
window till the skin on my eyes rose a quarter of an inch off

my face.

holy hello to you and that  
braided mustache halo you wear on a lipshits tone. your mother  
says that only we can be  
spun like this we can only be thawed  
on the defrost setting. my freezer burn itches and peels in  
monochrome white.

daddy found his way into a type of trope a type of makeshift  
reminder that if I keep up  
the tune I might as well be a dumfounded thirty watt light  
bulb.

lozenges

I come from long lines of card players  
I come from a long line of card player  
breathing for the tobacco that fills the air, the acid rain  
that comes washing down and  
the inlets that form a secret sharer. Their secrets hide  
past loves and the fold of older men  
that seem to haunt me or just never leave, always leaving  
their dentures soaking on the  
night stand.

ninja turtle gummies melting on the dashboard

banana boat sun screen

pores so big we soak in them

techno music on the radio

the family home now a car park, sleeps in sediments and the  
time capsule we planted will  
grow a tree with no trunk. a briefcase with no lips. a leaky  
faucet spits out blueberries.  
mother buys frozen orange juice concentrate. an ice core  
orange grove thawed out as the

tree frogs watch from the window. I step on one as I crouch in  
the bushes. its lungs push  
up and out gasping for air it cannot use.

I come from a long line of lovers. lovers of farmer's tans and  
personal pan pizza. if we  
can meet in a chatroom we can meet in real life, use the back  
of our throats as putting  
greens or even better sand down the chimney stack and use its  
remnants for homegrown  
tattoos.

*Fish photo courtesy [U.S. Fish and Wildlife service.](#)*