

Perimeter College and
The Georgia Poetry Circuit present

Poetry Readings by Kim Addonizio

Alpharetta Campus

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

11:30 a.m.

Room 1140

Clarkston Campus

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

2:30 p.m.

JCLRC - L1100

Dunwoody Campus

Thursday, April 6, 2017

11:30 a.m.

Building B, Room 2102

Newton Campus

Thursday, April 6, 2017

2:30 p.m.

Building 2N, Room 1100

Reception and book signing to follow.

The readings will be free and open to the public.

Biography

Kim Addonizio was born in Washington D.C., the daughter of a former tennis champion and a sports writer. She attended college in San Francisco, earning both her BA and MA from San Francisco State University, and she has spent much of her adult life in the Bay Area. She currently lives and teaches workshops in Oakland, California. Addonizio has received numerous awards for her work, including fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, a Pushcart Prize, and the John Ciardi Lifetime Achievement Award. Addonizio's poetry is known for its gritty, street-wise narrators, details about urban life, and wicked wit. Her collections of poetry include *The Philosopher's Club* (1994), *Jimmy & Rita* (1997), *Tell Me* (2000), *What Is This Thing Called Love* (2004), and *Lucifer at the Starlite* (2009). In addition to poetry, Addonizio has published fiction, notably the novels *Little Beauties* (2005) and *My Dreams Out in the Street* (2007). In 1997 Addonizio collaborated with Dorianne Laux on *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry*, a volume that focuses on the craft and process of writing poetry. Addonizio has also published another poetry guide called *Ordinary Genius: A Guide for the Poet Within* (2009). In 2016 she published a memoir: *Bukowski in a Sundress: Confessions from a Writing Life*. Her most recent collection of poems is *Mortal Trash*, which also appeared in 2016.

Selected Poems

First Poem for You

I like to touch your tattoos in complete
darkness, when I can't see them. I'm sure of
where they are, know by heart the neat
lines of lightning pulsing just above
your nipple, can find, as if by instinct, the blue
swirls of water on your shoulder where a serpent
twists, facing a dragon. When I pull you
to me, taking you until we're spent
and quiet on the sheets, I love to kiss
the pictures in your skin. They'll last until
you're seared to ashes; whatever persists
or turns to pain between us, they will still
be there. Such permanence is terrifying.
So I touch them in the dark; but touch them, trying.

You Don't Know What Love Is

but you know how to raise it in me
like a dead girl winched up from a river. How to
wash off the sludge, the stench of our past.
How to start clean. This love even sits up
and blinks; amazed, she takes a few shaky steps.
Any day now she'll try to eat solid food. She'll want
to get into a fast car, one low to the ground, and drive
to some cinderblock shithole in the desert
where she can drink and get sick and then
dance in nothing but her underwear. You know
where she's headed, you know she'll wake up
with an ache she can't locate and no money
and a terrible thirst. So to hell
with your warm hands sliding inside my shirt
and your tongue down my throat
like an oxygen tube. Cover me
in black plastic. Let the mourners through.

“What Do Women Want?”

I want a red dress.
I want it flimsy and cheap,
I want it too tight, I want to wear it
until someone tears it off me.
I want it sleeveless and backless,
this dress, so no one has to guess
what's underneath. I want to walk down
the street past Thrifty's and the hardware store
with all those keys glittering in the window,
past Mr. and Mrs. Wong selling day-old
donuts in their café, past the Guerra brothers
slinging pigs from the truck and onto the dolly,
hoisting the slick snouts over their shoulders.
I want to walk like I'm the only
woman on earth and I can have my pick.
I want that red dress bad.
I want to confirm
your worst fears about me,
to show you how little I care about you
or anything except what
I want. When I find it, I'll pull that garment
from its hanger like I'm choosing a body
to carry me into this world, through
the birth-cries and the love-cries too,
and I'll wear it like bones, like skin,
it'll be the goddamned dress they bury me in.

Mermaid Song

for Aya at fifteen

Damp-haired from the bath, you drape yourself
upside down across the sofa, reading,
one hand idly sunk into a bowl
of crackers, goldfish with smiles stamped on.
I think they are growing gills, swimming
up the sweet air to reach you. Small girl,
my slim miracle, they multiply.
In the black hours when I lie sleepless,
near drowning, dread-heavy, your face
is the bright lure I look for, love's hook
piercing me, hauling me cleanly up.

Last Lights

People are still having children it's unbelievable
tucking them into strollers and car seats still
washing their mouths out with soap maybe the way
ours were washed but never got clean because we're still
filthy with grief and longing and the knowledge
that the earth is a great spheroid head
with an oblate headache that hurricane swirl that
skull crack running through it still meeting for drinks
to talk about movies and exes still having sex
for the first time like horses on the Discovery channel a nuzzle
for foreplay then he mounts her then gallops off
still galloping still coming to the fence for an apple
engineered for redness for texture still bleeding
in the street for a whistle a word a sweetness rises
from the earth anyway still writing poems without
the grandeur of anything just a girl on the corner
with a rescued pigeon on her shoulder and two
little dogs one with its tongue permanently flagging out
the other turning mad circles but the pigeon
gently pecking at her lower lip in gratitude and love.

Good Girl

Look at you, sitting there being good.
After two years you're still dying for a cigarette.
And not drinking on weekdays, who thought that one up?
Don't you want to run to the corner right now
for a fifth of vodka and have it with cranberry juice
and a nice lemon slice, wouldn't the backyard
that you're so sick of staring out into
look better then, the tidy yard your landlord tends
day and night — the fence with its fresh coat of paint,
the ash-free barbeque, the patio swept clean of small twigs —
don't you want to mess it all up, to roll around
like a dog in his flowerbeds? Aren't you a dog anyway,
always groveling for love and begging to be petted?
You ought to get into the garbage and lick the insides
of the can, the greasy wrappers, the picked-over bones,
you ought to drive your snout into the coffee grounds.
Ah, coffee! Why not gulp some down with four cigarettes
and then blast naked into the streets, and leap on the first
beautiful man you find? The words Ruin me, haven't they
been jailed in your throat for forty years, isn't it time
you set them loose in slutty dresses and torn fishnets
to totter around in five-inch heels and slutty mascara?
Sure it's time. You've rolled over long enough.
Forty, forty-one. At the end of all this
there's one lousy biscuit, and it tastes like dirt.
So get going. Listen: they're howling for you now:
up and down the block your neighbors' dogs
burst into frenzied barking and won't shut up.