



once took  
**POetry**  
to the streets

Janet Kuypers collected older poetry travel readings  
scars publications 2009 chapbook cc&d ISSN#1068-5154

## Headache

whenever i get a headache  
it's right behind my eyebrows  
and it's a dull, constant ache

so whenever i say i have a headache  
eugene takes my hand  
and uses acupressure:

he pushes his thumb  
right in the middle of my palm.  
the pain disappears almost

immediately. but eventually  
i have to tell him to stop  
pressing my hand, that my

hand now hurts. he lets go,  
and the headache, almost  
immediately, comes back.

## Choices

don't hate yourself  
for the choices you've made  
just make the right choices

# the Measuring Scale

*Here's an addition for your  
degrading terminology  
of women list. In the  
construction field they  
(men) have devised another  
form of measurement.  
When something is being  
lowered or fitted into place  
they will often refer  
to an inch or so as:  
up or down about a cunt hair.  
They have gone so far  
as to determine that blonde  
pubic hair is the smallest  
increment and at the other  
end of the measuring scale  
is black pubic hair.*

*Pam, via the internet*

why don't you dissect me,  
take every single part of me  
and equate it with power tools,  
sports and violence?  
bang me, screw me, nail me,  
hammer me, bag me, pump  
me. shoot it in me. maybe you  
can even score.

if we're talking about  
measuring scales, what about  
the scale that defines the way  
you treat us:  
on one end is the minor stuff,  
calling us "baby" and "sugar,"  
whistling as we walk by, but  
then move along the scale, get to  
the blonde jokes, yes, they're so  
funny, then how about a pinch  
in the rear at the office,  
well, that's harmless enough  
and while you're at it, porn  
movies and magazines, what harm  
do they do, and hey, women  
have always worked at home,  
so you should have all the jobs  
and get the better pay anyway  
and since we're just your pro-  
perty, fuck us whenever you  
want, i mean, hey, you're doing  
it already in every other aspect  
of our repressed, oppressed lives  
so rape us, smack us around  
knock us down a flight of stairs  
that's what we're here for

god, i don't even know how to  
measure these things any more

## Loggers

i was wondering when nature's rights were  
substituted for human rights, somebody tell me

because, I mean, I care about the environment and all  
I like trees, and I'm a vegetarian

but I was in a car with an environmentalist once  
talking about the national forests, how they

were largely destroyed in the early nineteen hundreds  
by loggers, but are protected now, and this environmentalist

said to me, "kill the loggers"  
and the thing was, he meant it

he said he didn't, but he did, and I wonder if he realizes  
what he's willing to sacrifice for what he thinks is right

i wonder if the loggers would agree with him

## Didn't Know What It Was

i wanted you tonight  
and i wanted to make sure the world knew  
that i wanted you  
and it was only because  
i knew i wanted something  
and i didn't know what it was

# Why Do You

Why do you make us wait for you to come back?

Why do you allow suffering?

Why do you aim all hurricanes at mobile home parks?

Why do you let us destroy ourselves?

Why do you obstruct people from gaining knowledge?

Why do no major Hollywood film companies collapse in one of your earthquakes?

Why do you let innocent people die for crimes they didn't commit?

Why do you let the guilty go free?

Why do you fight against progress and technology?

Why do you fill this earth with so much pain?

Why do you not come down here, right now, and show us your face?

Why is it that the less intelligent people are, the more religious they are?

Why do you treat women in the Bible as possessions?

Why do you allow pro-wrestling?

Why do you insist we have faith in you and make us denounce our brains?

Why do you think we'd think you exist?

# eating.

(written with D.J.)

I can feel it gliding down my throat with a huge push of water like your body, sliding, up against my skin, warm and wet, wet like the feeling and taste of your tongue intertwined with mine. I feel it swirling down my throat, intoxicating me, head spinning almost nauseated by the mere thought of the taste rather than the actual sensation and I swallow the poison; let it cover me from the inside out. There is no pain, just a feeling of regret, what have I now lost with this one trigger I pulled? My life flashes, and what I expect to be a monument of achievements is an abyss. I realize there's nothing left to fear, because there's nothing to remember.

# A Woman Taking About Her Rapist Friend

He was my friend, and we had been  
through a lot together, our psychological  
ups and downs,

but he mixed drinks exceptionally well  
at his college frat parties, and his  
ice-blue eyes

always spoke the truth to me. It's amazing  
to think that the only reason we ever met  
was because one day

he wore a turtleneck that perfectly  
matched his eyes, and I had to tell him.  
I don't know why

he put up with my mood swings, with my  
self-destructive social life and man-hating,  
normally he didn't

care about women, never gave their opinions  
much thought, just tried to get them  
drunk at parties,

maybe he knew that and that's why he  
listened to me. Then for a few years  
our friendship

drifted, we didn't see each other much,  
I heard through the grapevine that he was  
failing in school.

Then one day, out of the blue, he comes  
over and he has two black eyes. And he  
says to me

that when he was in the parking garage  
two guys came and beat him up, and one  
of them said,

you raped my girlfriend. And then he looked  
at me and said, and you know, looking back,  
he was right.

I raped her. And I know he wanted sym-  
pathy, he wanted to hear me say something,  
but I couldn't.

And he said, I know this has to be hard for  
you to hear, but I wanted to tell you. I know  
it was wrong.

A part of me wanted to hate him. A part of  
me thought that if he was my friend I would  
be condoning

what he did. And a part of me thought that  
our friendship made him realize what he  
actually had done.

I tried to be there for him. I wasn't much  
good at it. Eventually, he moved away.  
I didn't try

to lose touch with him. But it's just that a  
part of me is still trying to figure out if I  
can be his friend.

Sometimes you just lose touch with some-  
one, sometimes that's all you can do.

# Issues

you think i'm going to come  
running back to you again, do you,  
you think i need you so desperately  
that all you have to say is that  
you do care about me  
and that you don't want me to  
leave your life and that you  
don't want this to be goodbye,  
well, you told me good-bye once  
before and i took you back  
but now you've done it again  
and you think it's all so easy  
and you think it's all roses and  
candy and i'm not going back to you  
and what you did isn't good for me  
and i know i sound like a psychai-  
trist now but you have some  
issues you need to deal with  
and i can't be your counselor;  
i need someone to counsel me  
and if you need help you can't  
help me, and i've figured that  
much out: you can't help me

## Japanese Television 2004

as reported in the New York Times:

one new television show in Japan  
boasts young women in bikinis  
who attempt to smash aluminum cans  
in between their breasts

another television show in Japan  
brings a young boy on stage  
to tell him his mother  
has been shot and killed  
to see how long it takes him  
to cry

I wonder what they'd think  
Married With Children  
or The Simple Life,  
with the likes of Paris Hilton

come to think of it, I wonder  
if Anna Nicole Smith  
would ever be sober enough  
to smash aluminum cans  
between her silicone breasts

come to think of it,  
with reality TV,  
and Jerry Springer...  
maybe I shouldn't complain  
about the television in Japan anymore



## Fulfill their Deepest Vocation

*Necessary emphasis should be placed also on  
those ordinary women  
who reveal the gift of their womanhood  
by placing themselves at the service of others*

*For in giving themselves to others each day  
women fulfill their deepest vocation*

*Letter to Women, Message of His Holiness  
POPE JOHN PAUL II, July 10*

of course, according to your religion women  
should be your servants, they should answer to you  
women can't be preists, or fulfill their dreams  
women have to rely on men to protect their rights

of course, god was created in man's image  
and, according to you, woman came from man  
just so she could churn out all his kids  
and that's probably why you ban birth control, too  
keep pressing your thumb down a little harder  
so that no one can get out of your control  
you, being the man, the ruler, the leader, the pope.

# In Their Homes Or In The Streets

*some women are raped  
in their homes or in the streets  
by men whom we call "strangers"*

*some women are raped  
in their homes or in the streets  
by men we call psychiatrists,  
doctors, college professors,  
friends, lovers,  
husbands and fathers*

*and some women are raped  
in the streets or in offices  
by men who merely sit there  
and commit rape with looks  
with smirks  
with insults  
with threats*

*Bob Lamm, 1976*

you'll never understand

have you ever felt  
that everything you did  
from the clothes you chose to wear  
to the way you styled your hair  
to the way you walked down the street  
to the way you sat at your desk

to whether you looked at people  
as they passed you in the grocery store  
when you picked up the food for the  
family

have you ever felt  
that everything you did  
was under the scrutiny  
of half the world

that a stare could haunt you  
if you looked too confident  
or your eyes wandered for too long  
and actually caught someone's gaze

or your skirt was too short  
or you didn't cross your legs

or if you ate a banana  
or happened to lick your lips

have you felt it  
well, you're not a woman

## Statue

i think of statues of greek gods  
they were what people could aspire to be  
they were something to strive for

and i've had no inspiration  
other than my own mind  
and i've created my own images  
to keep me going

and i've succeeded  
i've done it all  
i've got the fame, the fortune

and now i look around  
and all i see is destruction  
i see the ruins of a fallen age

and i just want to see that statue  
it's so vivid in my mind  
and i know it has to be out there somewhere

but i've been working so hard so long  
that i forgot about the light at the end of the tunnel  
and now i don't know where to look

## Take the Pain

When I'm laying down in the sun  
I close my eyes only so slightly  
And the sun beats down and burns my face  
And it penetrates my eyelids and scorches  
My eyes. I strain to keep from squinting.  
I struggle to keep my eyes just lightly closed  
To survive the scorching light, the burning.

Do you understand this struggle, do you do this  
To see how long you can take the pain

You know, when I struggle like this under the light  
I can feel my lips beginning to part  
And almost expect you to reach over and kiss me

There's a fine line between pleasure and pain

When I'm laying down in the sun  
I close my eyes only so slightly  
And I take the pain

## Rain

The rain is coming  
down so hard now... I  
don't think it has ever  
been this hard. I have  
to stop it, I have to  
save myself from it.  
I can't drive like this.  
The wipers only brush  
it off after it has hit.  
I have to stop it, keep  
it away from me

you asked me before  
if there were only so many  
loves in your life

if there are only so  
many chances  
for love

and I said yes

and I know  
that you think  
it's because of fate  
or god  
or religion

Chances One:  
Yes, It's Yes

but I know that  
there are only  
so many chances  
to feel that bond

that there can only be  
so many people  
who perfectly fit you

who fit life a glove

who wants what you want  
who feels like I feel  
who dreams what you dream

you ask me if  
there are only so many loves  
who dream what you dream

you ask me if  
there are only so many loves  
and the answer is  
yes  
oh yes, it's yes

# John

(edited 1996)

On the other side of the room  
I sense him through the cigarette smoke,  
the roar of conversation, and the dim lights.

I look at his face, but I can no longer see John.  
I have dreamt and envisioned a God-like figure.  
I have imagined his sensitivity  
and his thoughtfulness. I have felt his hands caress  
my skin and his lips meet mine. He has held me a  
thousand times, protecting me. I have rehearsed our  
moments together in my mind, the moments I've  
created: the candlelight dinners, the dancing,  
the loving. While never knowing him any more  
than glimpses of his face across a crowded room.

The music blares as I look over my shoulder  
between the empty faces and see his image  
laughing, smiling, talking with friends. And my eyes flare  
with envy. I wonder why he is not with me,  
but I know the face across the room is not John.  
It is a door to a dream that will never be.

## Her Blood is Evaporating

she had to go to the doctors today  
they called me in the morning,  
because they knew the doctors would take forever

so she went to the doctors today  
to get blood  
she apparently needed a few pints

so I even asked after the fact:  
she didn't cut herself, she's not bleeding  
why does she need more blood?

and I couldn't get an answer  
I know the cancer's made her weak now,  
but it's not like her blood is evaporating

all I know is that when she needs blood  
she feels very tired, lethargic  
and she has more energy with more blood

so I wonder: is the cancer actually  
destroying her blood so she needs more?  
and will she have to do this until she dies?

# Seven and Seven, plus Eighteen

I know I'm supposed to be the creative one  
but I started my schooling in computer science engineering  
if I ever write anything,  
it's not creative,  
it's what makes sense  
    which is what I feel

I say I'm a writer  
I say I'm an artist  
but I haven't known what to say to you

and if I wrote something  
it would be too straight-forward

but I want to do this for you  
I want you to understand  
and all I can think  
is that if I were a painter  
I'd be Michelangelo  
and paint my love for you  
like it was the Sistine Chapel,  
    our hands touching in the sky,  
like it was our Last Supper

if I were a painter  
I'd give you something  
that would be cherished,  
it may deteriorate with each passing century  
but as time wore on  
and oil paint peeled away  
it would show more layers  
of my love for you

what am I saying  
painting like Michelangelo  
I'd probably paint like Jackson Pollock  
and throw splashes of paint on a canvas  
and call the dripping lines of splattered paint  
art



maybe I'm not an artist  
but when I met you, I asked you questions  
I wanted to learn about you  
I wanted to soak you in

so maybe I'm not a writer  
maybe I'm not an artist  
maybe I'm an observer  
like an astronomer  
looking out into the universe  
trying to understand what makes everything  
everything

what makes my tie to you so concrete  
like my father and my grandfather's construction business  
like my brother's desire to design buildings

you wondered why I love tall buildings  
reaching up towards the sky

maybe my tie is so much more concrete than art

I travel around the world  
learning different histories, different cultures

I fly in airplanes  
I jump from airplanes  
I pilot airplanes  
trying to get closer to the stars

and when I'm on the ground  
I admire the tall buildings,  
reaching up toward infinity

so maybe I'm meant to be an astronomer  
studying something colder than ice, far away

Pluto is an aberrant ball of ice  
I don't know, I was taught it was a planet  
but then they told me no,  
it's not  
it's just a ball of ice from the Kuiper Belt

the Kuiper Belt  
isn't it ironic  
they say it wasn't what I wanted  
but I wanted to learn  
and it's still a part of me

#

we were outside at night in fair hope  
to see the intricate quilt of stars in the sky  
and lying on the grass  
the stars over us, blanketing us  
    smothering me in my love for you  
I rested my head on your shoulder  
and fell asleep with you, under the stars

molecule by molecule,  
we originate from stars  
and the stars were our blanket  
as a deer came walking feet away from us, not afraid

and now I know we are all linked,  
our bodies formed from stardust

but outer space  
is a violent place  
violent explosions create the stars  
and our earth has earthquakes,  
avalanches, volcanoes  
tsunamis, typhoons

and in all this madness  
somehow I've found you

I'm not a writer,  
I'm not a journalist  
I'm an observer  
and I came to you asking questions  
and somehow broke your hardened shell

yes, in all this madness  
somehow I found you  
I've survived the thunder  
and the lightning  
the blizzards,  
the hurricanes  
and the tornadoes  
I've lived through the drought  
I've survived it all  
I've even been dealt a near fatal blow  
from humanity

and it's as if the Gods are paying me back for everything  
by giving me  
you

and with you I have walked on the tops of glaciers  
crouching down from the violent winds  
looking down into the beginning of time

with you I have watched solar storms  
and the geomagnetic aberrations of the Aurora Borealis  
from near the Arctic Circle

and what has man done  
that you can see from outer space?  
well, I believe I even held your hand  
as we walked along the Great Wall of China

as I said before,  
I'm only an observer  
but now I can't imagine  
seeing the world without you

and with these observations,  
I thee wed  
because I will never let you go

#

I heard a country song  
about a man who died  
and was watching his love  
from above

and I thought, if one of us left this earth  
would they watch from above  
and wail 'til we could be together again?

once our spirits found each other  
I wonder if our spirits could hold hands  
the way we always do when we're together  
making sure not to let each other go

I've seen galaxies collide  
I've seen comets smash into planets  
I've seen supernovae and the death of stars  
and in all of that, I still found you

as I said, I'm only an observer  
but I've found what I've been looking for

so I'll tighten my grip on your hand  
because I don't ever want to let you go

## White Knuckled

The hot air was sticking  
to her skin almost pulling  
tugging at her very  
flesh as she walked  
outside down the  
stairs from the train  
station. Just then a  
breeze hot and  
sticky hit her  
in just the wrong  
way, brushed against her  
lower neck, and she  
felt his breath again,  
not his breath  
when he raped  
her, but his stench  
hot rank  
when he was  
just close to her.  
Her breath quickened,  
like the catch of her  
breath when she has  
just stopped  
crying. All the emotion  
is still there not  
going away. She

walks to the bottom  
of the stairs, railing  
white-knuckled by her  
small tender hands,  
the hands of a child,  
and that ninety degree  
breeze suddenly  
gives her a  
chill. They say when  
you get a chill it means  
a goose walked  
over your grave.  
She knows better. She knows  
that it is him  
walking, and that  
he trapped that child in  
that grave

## New to Chicago

I'm still new to this city  
I know, I know, I've been here for years  
but I haven't gone to the Sears Tower Observatory  
since my Junior Prom

but when I walk by the First Chicago building  
the beams along the north side  
sloping up, parabolic pillars curving up to the sky

when I walk by the First Chicago building  
I walk up along the side  
and lean up against one of the sloping pillars  
press my body against the cold concrete  
feel the cold against my chin, my breasts, by thighs

and look up along the curve, stretching up towards the sky

you know, these pillares look like race tracks  
and I could see something come rushing down that curve  
a matchbox car, a race car  
a marble, a bowling ball  
a two-ton weight

I see the speed, the power, and it  
almost makes me afraid to look up

and every time I walk by the First Chicago building  
I do the same thing, I do this little ritual  
and it feels like the first time

## Top of the Mountain

so we were in the car together, Lorrie driving, Sandy in the back seat, the humidity from the Southwest Florida night seeping in through the cracks in the car windows. And it was quiet for a moment, and the lull in the conversation prompted Lorrie to ask, “so if you had an Indian name, what would it be?” and I was completely lost by the introduction of this question, I mean, where did it come from and what kind of Indian name was she talking about? Sequoia? And then Sandy says, “you mean like ‘Fucking Dogs?’”, and Lorrie laughs and says yes, a name like Running Bear or Soaring Eagle. So sandy didn’t think Fucking Dogs should be her name, so she came up with “Teacher of Children,” and I thought for a moment, tried to encapsulate my life one catchy little phrase, and finally I came up with “One who Rests at Top of Mountain.” Lorrie then explained to us that the names were actually given to Indian boys as a rite to manhood by a mentor of theirs, often a grandfather-figure, and the name was a reminder to them of what they should become. So I changed mine to “Patient One,” but you know, looking back at that night, driving through the musty sticky night, I still think that it is better to say that I shall rest at the top of the mountain.

# In The Air

## Part One

Over Las Vegas with my family, my sister  
and myself in one row, my parents in the  
other across the way. We're nearing the end  
of our flight; mother tells me to sit in her  
seat and look out the window as we fly  
over the Hoover dam. Sitting next to father,  
I watch him lean out the window saying,  
just think of all that concrete.  
I look over his shoulder, the dam  
no larger than a thumbnail, the water,  
like cracks in a sidewalk, like the  
wrinkles in the palm of my hand.

Over Phoenix, preparing for another  
descent at 8:50 p.m., but it's usually fifteen  
minutes late, as it is now, I'm getting  
used to the schedule now. The mountains look  
like the little mountains you see on  
topographically correct globes, little ridges,  
as if they're made of sand, if you just lean  
your head down a little bit, your exhaling  
can make them all blow away in the  
breeze. And I know that what I'm looking for  
is out there, somewhere, I think this is  
where it is, I better not be wrong, I just  
have to search a little harder and find it.  
I love the city lights from above at night.  
Have you ever thought of how much power  
it takes to light all those buildings?  
All that energy. And every time I look,  
look out that little window with rounded corners,  
i see a string of yellow Italian Christmas  
lights strung across the ground.



And little Champaign, Illinois, and those little airplanes that 25 people fit in. The airport there is really nice, actually, it's made for a bigger city, a city of dreams and tall buildings, that's what I think. The roar of the planes are so loud, though, not like those 747's where you can sleep during the flight. But they fly low enough so that I can see the building I live in from the sky. And where I work. There's the store. Neil Street. Assembly Hall. The bars.

Over Fort Myers, the city always looks different from any other place, all those palm trees, the marshes. Like you've just landed somewhere foreign, and pretty soon the big tour will begin. You can feel the heat, the humidity sticking your shirt to your back between your shoulder blades, and your neck, sticking to your neck too, from inside your cabin, before you even land.

Chicago looks grand from the sky with this huge expanse of lake next to it, like civilization crept up as far as it could but finally had to stop. The power of nature stopping the power of man kind, for once. And I cannot decide which one looks more evil. The lake does, looks evil i mean, at least at night, at night it looks like two spheres: a string of lights and a huge void. Daylight, and the snow on the ground looks dirty, too many cars have splashed mud on it as they drove by. And the sky always matches the shade of grey of the snow: fitting for the city of the Blues. Maybe the snow is already that color, that perfect shade of grey, when it falls from the sky in this city.

## Part Two

Have you ever noticed that the air isn't normal air in an airplane? I mean, I know they have to pump in the air, and pressurize it and all in order to keep us alive up there, but there's just something about the air in the cabin that's different. It's got a smell to it, that's the only way I can describe it. A smell of all these people, going places, running to something, or running away from it.

When I go on vacation and I promise people I'll write, I usually write from the plane, just so I don't have to worry about it for the rest of my trip. And I write their letter on an airsick bag. It's more interesting than paper.

I like the window seat, I like to look out the window. Clouds look like cotton balls when you're above them, and when you're landing cars look like little ants, on a mission, bringing food back to their hill. Little soldiers, back and forth, back and forth. And the streets look like veins, capillaries in some massive, monstrous body. And the farmland looks like little squares of colors. I wonder why each plot of land is a different color, what's growing there that makes them different. Or maybe it's that some of them are turning shades of red and brown because some of them dying.

Once I was bumped from my flight,  
but on the next available flight they gave  
me first class. And I sat there, feeling  
underdressed. And afraid to order a drink.

And it always seems that you're stuck  
sitting next to someone that is either  
too wide for their seat, or is a businessman  
with his newspaper stretched out  
and his lap top computer on his little  
fold out table. Once, when I was on a  
flight back from D. C., a flight attendant  
walked by, stack of magazines in her  
hand, Time, Newsweek, Businessweek,  
and I stopped her, asking what magazines  
she had. And she replied, "Oh, these  
magazines are for men." This is a true  
story. And I asked her again what she  
had. I had already read Time, so I took  
Newsweek.

## Changing Garments

Agonies are  
one of my changes of garments,

I do not ask the wounded person  
how he  
feels  
or  
who he  
is

I myself become the wounded person,  
My hurts turn livid upon me  
as I lean on a cane and observe

# The Men at the Construction Site

a woman told me  
that scientists did an experiment  
where a woman  
first walked past a construction site  
with her head down

no one bothered her,  
no one noticed her  
everyone at the site left her alone

then, later in the day,  
she walked past again  
in the same outfit, with the same stride  
but this time she walked with  
her head up,  
more confidently

and that's when she got  
the calls, the whistles  
from the men at the construction site

and you tell me it's not deliberate  
and you tell me it's not an effort  
to keep women in their place

# The Hunter and the Fox

I've been a hunter, you know  
I've been working at it for a while  
I've gotten pretty good at it

I've been looking for the right prey  
all this time  
someone I could dominate  
isn't that my role, you know

I've been looking for an animal  
for a fox  
someone that would be a good show-piece

I've been looking all this time  
and I'm still looking

so where is he

## the Burning

I take the final swig of vodka  
feel it burn it's way down my throat  
hiss at it scorching my tongue  
and reach for the bottle to pour myself another.  
I think of how my tonsils scream  
every time I let the alcohol rape me.  
Then I look down at my hands --  
shaking -- holding the glass of poison --  
and think of how these were the hands  
that should have pushed you away from me.  
But didn't. And I keep wondering  
why I took your hell, took your poison.  
I remember how you burned your way  
through me. You corrupted me  
from the inside out, and I kept coming back.  
I let you infect me, and now you've  
burned a hole through me. I hated it.  
Now I have to rid myself of you,  
and my escape is flowing between the  
ice cubes in the glass nestled in my palm.  
But I have to drink more. The burning  
doesn't last as long as you do.

## Poam: A Conversation With Jimbo Breen

*dedicated to Steve, a marine*

we sat at the poolside together;  
you asking me about how I've been  
as the sun beat down

and we talked about nuclear war.  
You said you didn't believe in it,  
and I strained to understand

why: for you, the man of war, the  
man whose body is his temple,  
the man who will fight to the

death. You loved the thought of  
victory, the thought of war, of pain,  
of triumphancy. And I sat there

in the swimming pool while you sat  
on the edge. I paused. Then it  
occurred to me: you would want

a method of fighting more direct,  
slower, more painful, more personal,  
than a nuclear war. You'd want to

fight them one on one, man to  
man, with your fists. And your eyes  
lit up. I was beginning to understand,

now, only years later. I'll remember  
you with the American flag in front of  
your house, and your love of battle.

# I'm Thinking About Myself Too Much

all of my life it  
has all been about you  
what do you need  
what do you want  
how can i help you  
what can i do for you  
and now for once  
i start to live  
and now you tell me  
that i'm thinking about  
myself too much  
and i think back to  
all the time i've  
spent with you  
and all the care  
i've given you  
and now you tell me  
that i'm thinking about  
myself too much  
and i've cooked for  
you and i've cleaned  
for you and i've made  
sure everything in  
your world made sense  
and now you tell me  
that i'm thinking about  
myself too much  
and all i can think  
is that you're only angry  
because i'm thinking  
about me at all

## I Have My Dreams

I don't even care  
if you call me anymore  
because I have my dreams  
and they make me happier  
than you

## Warren Stories

i heard this story about this fat woman  
who sat naked on a pork chop bone once

and didn't notice when it lodged itself  
among her folds of fat. years later,

when she felt a sharp pain, and the doctors  
couldn't figure out what it was, they opened

her up and found the pork chop, and realized  
that her skin just eventually grew over it.



## Can't Answer That One

i have a better job than you  
i have more talent than you  
i've made more money than you

i'm attractive  
i'm funny  
i'm kind

i'm strong  
i'm intelligent  
i'm beautiful

and i look at what we had  
and i wonder why i ever tried  
and why i ever bothered

why did i ever put up with you  
why did i think i needed you  
why did i let you make me unhappy

with all my talent, with all my  
brains  
i still can't answer that one

## He's an Escapist

he's an escapist  
from his wife, kids, the business  
and fled by drinking

## Falling From the Sky

I'm taking a one-way flight today

And you know, when people say they have a one-way ticket  
You assume the plane

  is landing them somewhere  
And not flying them back

But lucky me, my only way back  
Is to jump out of the sky

And hope I land on my own two feet

And my flight takes off  
In just a little while  
And I can feel that tension knot  
That knot's rope, being pulled  
By all my nerves

And like it was heartburn  
I want to slam my fist into my chest  
To try to make the pain go away

So I've spent all my life  
Trying to soar so high

But I guess I have to be prepared  
For coming back to earth

## Each Morning

it is like a contest  
me and the sky

I stare out  
at the horizon  
until it gets up

and comes to embrace me  
I feel it, I swear

I make believe  
it is my father

This is known  
as genetics

I go through this  
each morning  
I think this each morning

## Never Did The Same

we've put each other through hell, i know  
we've tried each other's patience  
we've goaded each other on  
we've pissed each other off  
we've jerked each other around  
but i've noticed two things, one  
is that whenever you were unhappy  
i turned on the charm, i tried  
to make your day, i tried to  
make you laugh, and the other  
thing that i noticed is that  
you never did the same for me

## More Than We Should Have

when i think of him i usually think about the drinking

actually, i never think of him as drinking

come to think of it

i just think of him as drunk

i can't even remember seeing the drinks in his hand

but his perception of the world is always altered

but someone reminded me tonight

of when he would work outside in the the cold Chicago winters

and he would come back with his moustache frozen

and there would be little icicles hanging

down toward his mouth

and then i thought of

when i waited with him once at the airport

because we were picking up someone

and we sat in the shrimp cocktail lounge

and he drank, and ate, and i waited

and as we left

we tried to pay the expressway toll with pennies

but some of the coins fell onto the street

and we had to throw more change at the machine

we paid more than we should have

i'm sure we did

# Because This Is What We Do

we arrive to our parties and hour after they start  
we know full well when we are supposed to be there  
but we show up late anyway  
we don't have any prior engagements  
but we act like we do

and we make sure we're dressed well,  
but not too well  
enough to impress,  
but not enough to be over-dressed  
you can't overdo it  
you have to look good, you know  
but not like you tried to

and we don't talk to anyone we don't know  
and we make sure our gaze  
doesn't wander for too long  
because we have enough friends and lovers  
and we don't need you

and as soon as the party is starting to decline  
we make our way to a bar,  
bring a few friends with us  
because we can't stay in one place too long  
because we have other places to go  
we must move on to bigger and better things  
we must get out of here

this is how we keep our friends  
and this is how we keep our social standing  
because this is the way it is  
because this what we do

## Before I Learned Better

you'd think that the people that are most like you  
are perfect for you  
but if you find someone like that  
and you're dating someone like that  
you'll see  
that they now have the same faults as you do  
except their faults seem so much worse  
and you want to kill them for the faults you have  
and you want to crack their head open  
and see their brains flowing out in the street

yeah, i know your mood swings, your hatred  
your love of life and truth and fairness and art  
and your anger  
are all as strong as mine  
but i'm still going to be hard on you  
i'm still going to be hard on you  
for being me  
before i learned better

## The Mind of John

humans are the only animals that have thought  
that's why we have gods

## Self Confidence

He hadn't seen me  
In five to ten years  
And we hugged each other hello  
And he asked me,  
"Have I gotten shorter?"  
And I was saying earlier  
That he was taller than me  
Back in the old days  
But I guess he DID seem shorter  
So I said,  
"I don't know."  
But I knew that I didn't get taller  
So he said,  
"Maybe you slouched a lot more  
When I saw you before."  
And I thought, "Well, maybe.  
I have a lot more self-confidence now.  
I stand up for myself now."

## Deity Discipline

the devil takes care  
of his own in their lives God  
makes people suffer for him

## Pressure On Me Again

Man, you put a lot of pressure on me  
and I feel this pressure so many times  
and there's nothing I can do about it

I'm so sick of not being in control of everything  
I'm tired of defining how everything goes

I have to define my own life  
and I don't know how to make all the changes  
I want to happen well, happen in my life  
it's hard for me to make these  
changes actually, happen  
when I'm all alone on this one  
and have to do these things myself

I have to define my own life  
I need to take a magic marker  
a big black bold marker  
and create the path that defines who I am

I need to make my own choices  
and color them in  
so no one can put that pressure on me again



## Feel So Much

There are some points where  
you just have to stop caring about things

Well, maybe I care about too much stuff  
and that is why I have to stop myself

Sometimes you just have to draw a line  
to separate yourself from other people  
because you can care too much  
and sometimes others don't care enough

It's hard to draw that line, you know  
because to say that you don't care any more  
is like killing a part of yourself

Well, I've been doing that for years  
am I dead yet

Does it seem cruel to want to kill  
a part of yourself  
Maybe  
But  
does it seem cruel to feel so much

## Ants and Gods

do ants have gods?  
you don't see crosses  
slammed into tops of ant hills.

## Content With Inferior Men

there are some theorists that say  
that women need to be able to look up to a man  
in order to feel complete. these theorists  
would say that a woman could not be president,  
at least not on a personal level.  
think of it - here is a woman, the most important  
person on earth, and she would never know of anyone  
who had more power than her. how could she  
look up to any man? how could she admire  
any man? how could she respect any man?  
and you know, i can kind of see that point,  
how can you love someone you don't respect,  
i mean, i want someone in my life that can teach  
me something, that can help me grow, and if  
i was the most powerful person on earth  
i would probably think that no one could teach  
me anything. but the only thing i could think of  
in response to this theory is, why don't men  
who are the presidents of the united states  
of america find themselves unhappy with their  
boring, unequal, supportive wives? why is it  
that men are content with inferior women  
but women aren't content with inferior men?

# My Father, Shooting an Animal

we sat in our  
dining room, looking out  
the sliding glass doors

onto the patio, the  
expanse of concrete that  
led to the pool, fenced

away from the ravine.  
Father had a dislocated  
shoulder, his arm was

in a sling. He had  
a friend's shotgun, some  
sort of instrument

and he looked out  
the window, sister and I  
behind him, looking

over his shoulder.  
And then he saw a small  
squirrel, walking

along the edge of the  
patio, and father opened the  
sliding glass doors

propped his gun  
over his dislocated shoulder,  
tried to look

through the sight and  
keep the gun balanced. He  
usually didn't use

guns, he seldom  
borrowed them. And here he  
stood, in his own

house, aiming at the  
animal at the edge of our  
property, with one

good arm. And then  
he shot. We all looked; the  
animal, hit, stumbled

into a nearby hole.  
He hit the animal, despite all  
his trouble, all his pain.

People wonder why  
he shot the animal. I wonder  
how. Could I do it, even

with two good arms.  
Could I see through the sight,  
could I aim well, strike.

## Isn't It Amazing

Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to destroy something than to fight for it. It's amazing to see people throw away their lives day after day like a bag of trash taken to the corner for someone else to carry away. You can forget about the trash when someone gets rid of it for you. Now all you have to do is bring it to the corner and then wait for them to do their work.

Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to destroy something than to fight for it. Isn't it amazing. Isn't it amazing how willing we are to give up our chances at happiness. Isn't it amazing how afraid we are of life. Isn't it funny how we don't want to embarrass ourselves. Quick. Take out the trash. Hopefully no one will see you in your bathrobe as you make your way to the end of your driveway. All you have to do is turn around and leave it there. Someone else will clean up the mess. Someone else will pick up the pieces. This is what we do, in America. This is how we avoid hurt. This is how we stay ahead. Now look who has egg on their face.

Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to destroy something than to fight for it. Once you've made that decision, once you know that you're going to be the one holding the aces, you can watch the rest of the world squirm. If only those fools knew better, you think. If only they knew what you know. It's emotion that gets them in trouble. Just don't cross that line. Isn't it amazing how much easier it is to destroy something than to fight for it. It seems the obvious choice. Isn't it amazing.

## Writing Your Name

I sat there  
in the shade  
I took  
a stick  
I wrote  
your name  
in the ground  
preacher says  
the number one  
sin is lust  
then I am  
condemned  
to Hell  
for  
I  
want  
you  
and I  
don't care  
what  
preacher says  
for if  
the elements  
wash away  
your name tonight  
I will  
be back  
tomorrow  
to write it  
again.

## Under the Sea

I'd like to be  
Under the sea  
To see the fish go swim,  
I'd like to squish  
A jelly fish  
And then let go of him.  
I'd like to grab  
A soft-shelled crab  
And take him for a walk  
I'd like to hurdle  
Over a turtle  
And teach dolphins to talk.  
I'd like to see  
A manatee  
And then go play by him,  
I'd like to do  
All of these things  
If only I could swim!

# Infallible

i used to think that i would like to get into an accident to be injured, to see who would care about me: to see who would feel bad for not paying me any attention. now i think that if i were to be injured, that a few of you would revel in it, that a few of you would like to spoon-feed me, to take care of me, just to be able to prove to yourselves that i'm not infallible. but sooner or later you'd get bored with it, you'd need someone to take care of you again, and i'd be cast aside. so i'm never going to give you that chance, i'm never going to let my guard down, not even once, no matter how much i may need help from any one of you, because none of you are willing to think that i'm human and have real needs

# Anyone Good Enough

i used to think that i was no good  
that i was worthless that i meant nothing

and then i got a good job  
and then i got me a ton of money

and then i looked in the mirror  
and i realized i was gorgeous

and people laughed at my jokes  
and people thought i was talented and strong

and now i look around me  
and i can't find anyone good enough

and i wonder if i expect too much  
but i know for a fact that i deserve more

## Motorcycle

you scared me. but i liked it.  
i remember sitting behind you  
on your motorcycle. i think  
my fingers shook as i held your waist.  
and i remember looking at my head  
on your shoulder in the rear-view mirror.  
and i smiled, because it was your shoulder.  
as i felt more comfortable with you,  
i moved my head closer  
to your neck, smelled your cologne,  
felt the warmth radiate from your skin.

you scared me. i clenched  
your waist every time  
i thought you should have used the brakes.  
but i still sat behind you. besides,  
it was a good excuse  
to hold on to you.

## An Innocent Glance

An innocent glance  
turned into a lengthy stare  
A simple hello  
turned into an intimate conversation  
A common acquaintance  
turned into a lover  
My heaven  
turned into my hell

for another woman  
turned everything we had  
into nothing

Now he has so many opportunities.  
He has nothing to lose. Why not  
come out of the wilderness, attack  
everything it sees. Kill something.  
Suck the blood out, make him feel  
alive for once more. Let them try  
to restrain him. He has nothing to lose.

And for now it can fly to the highest  
redwood, look out over the world.  
Despise the world, the world that made  
him be alone, leaving him alone. Who  
will carry his name? Who will care  
for him when he is old? Who can he  
read bed time stories to?

Now it can feel death creeping upon  
him, closer and closer. He wants to  
scream. He calls upon nature; the  
tides rise, earthquakes shatter homes.  
He does not feel vindicated. He has lost.

Last

Before

Extinction

And for now she can swim to the deepest  
darkest cave in the Pacific, hide from  
the solitude, swim lower and lower;  
can she find where all of the other  
animals of dying species hide, can she  
find them. There must be others. They  
can understand, they can live together,  
at the bottom of the earth. Could they  
show their pain for their species, share  
what is left of their love, create a new race?

Soon they will be no more  
and we will be taking their bones,  
reassembling them, studying their  
form, rebuilding their lives, revering  
them more than we ever did  
in life. This is what it all becomes.  
This is what it all boils down to.  
Study the bones. Study the mistakes.  
Study the bones.



## On An Airplane With a Frequent Flyer

“I was once on a flight to Hawaii and I was waiting in line for the lavatory. There was always a line for a flight this long, you know, it seemed the washrooms were always on demand on a flight this long. So I finally got into the washroom, you know, and I looked into the toilet, and someone, well, lost the battle against a very healthy digestive system and left the “spoils” in the toilet, stuck. Maybe it didn’t want to go down into the sewage tank where all the other waste from this long trip went to. Can you imagine all the stuff this airplane had to carry across the ocean? Well, anyway, so I saw this stuck in the toilet, and I went to the washroom, and when I was done i flushed and it still wouldn’t budge, and so I opened the door and walked out into the aisle of the plane again. And there was this long line of people waiting to use this cramped little washroom, and I just wanted to tell them all, ‘you know, I didn’t do that.’ And then it occurred to me that everyone, when they leave the bathroom on that plane, will think the exact same thing.”

# Everything Was Alive and Dying

I

I had a dream the other night  
I walked out of the city  
to a forest  
and there were neatly paved bicycle paths  
and trash cans every fifty feet  
and trash every ten

and then a raccoon came right up to me  
she had a few little baby raccoons  
following her, it was so cute, I  
wish I had my camera

and she spoke to me,  
she said, thank you  
thank you for not buying furs,  
I know you humans are pretty smart,  
you have to be able to figure out a way  
to keep yourselves warm  
without killing me

and I said, you know they don't  
do it for warmth,  
they do it for fashion, they do it  
for power. And she said I know.  
But thank you anyway.

II

Then I walked a little further  
and there was a stray cat  
she still had her little neon collar on  
with a little bell  
and she walked a few feet,  
stretched her front paws,  
oh, she looked so darling

and then she walked right up to me  
and she said thank you  
and I said for what?  
And she just looked at me for a moment,  
her little ears were standing straight up,  
and then she said, you know,  
in some countries I'm considered  
a delicacy. And I said how  
do you know of these things?  
And she said  
when somebody eats one of you  
word gets around  
and then she looked up at me again  
and said, and in some countries  
the cow is sacred. Wouldn't they  
love to see how you humans  
prepare them for slaughter, how you  
hang them upside-down  
and slit their throats  
so their still beating hearts  
will drain out all the blood for you  
and she said isn't it funny  
how arbitrary your decision  
to eat meat is?  
and I said, don't put me  
in that category, I don't eat meat  
and she said I know

### III

And I walked deeper in to the forest  
managed to get away from the  
picnic tables and the outhouses  
that lined the forest edges  
the roaring cars gave way to the  
rustling of tree branches  
crackling of fallen leaves  
under my step

when the wind tunneled through  
the wind whistled and sang  
as it flew past the bark

and leaves

I walked  
listened to the crack of dead branches  
under my feet  
and I felt a branch against my shoulder  
I looked up and I could hear  
the trees speak to me,  
and they said  
thank you for letting the  
endangered animals live here amongst us  
we do think they're so pretty  
and it would be a shame to see them go  
and thank you for recycling paper  
because you're saving us  
for just a little while longer

we've been on this planet for so long  
embedded in the earth  
we do have souls, you know  
you can hear it in our songs  
we cling with our roots  
we don't want to let go

and I said, but I don't do much,  
I don't do enough  
and they said we know  
but we'll take what we can get

IV

and I woke up in a sweat

V

so tell me, Bob Dole  
so tell me, Newt Gingrich  
so tell me, Pat Bucannan  
so tell me, Jesse Helms  
if you woke up from that dream  
would you be in a sweat, too?

VI

Do you even know why  
we should save the rain forest?  
Oh preserve the delicate balance,  
just tear the whole forest down,  
what difference does it make?  
Put in some orange groves  
so our concentrate orange juice  
can be a little cheaper

did you know that medical researchers  
have a very, very hard time  
trying to come up with synthetic  
cures for diseases on their own?  
It helps them out a little if they can first  
find the substance in nature.  
A tree that appears in the rain forest  
may be the only one of its species.  
Or one like it may be two miles away,  
instead of right next to it. I wonder  
how many cures we've destroyed  
to plant more orange groves.  
Serves us right.

VII

You know my motives aren't selfless  
I know that these things are worthwhile in my life

I'd like to find a cure to these diseases  
before I die of them  
and I'm not just a vegetarian  
because I think it's wrong to kill an animal  
unless I have to  
I also know the excess protein  
pulls the calcium away from my bones  
and gives me osteoporosis  
and the excess fat gives me heart attacks  
and I also know that we could be feeding  
ten times more people  
with the same resources used for meat production

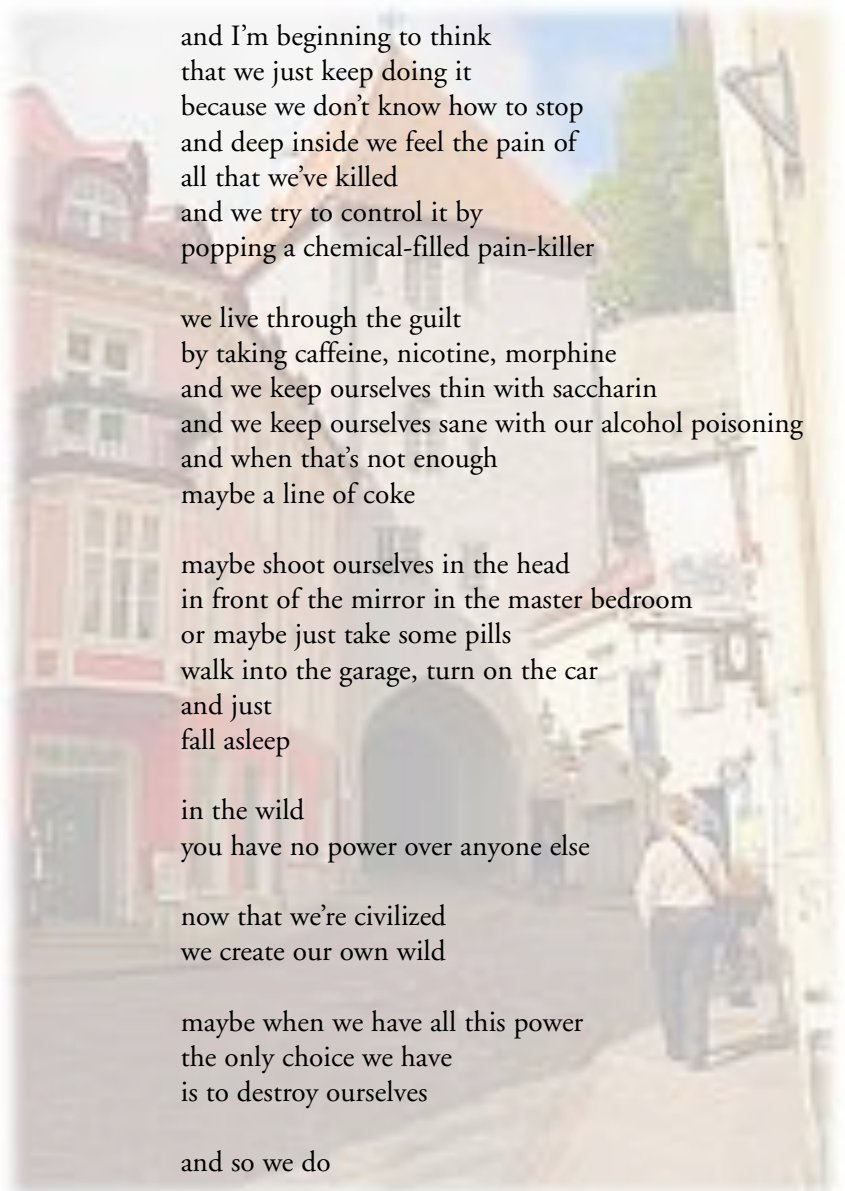
You know, I know you're looking at me  
and calling me an extremist  
but I'm sitting here, looking around me  
looking at the destruction caused by family values  
and thinking the right, moral, non-violent decisions  
are also those extreme ones

## VIII

everything is linked here  
we destroy our animals  
so we can be wasteful and violent  
we destroy our plants  
we destroy our earth  
we're even destroying our air  
we wreak havoc on the soil, on the atmosphere  
we dump our wastes into our lakes  
we pump aerosol cans and exhaust pipes

and you tell me I'm extreme

and these animals and forests keep calling out to me  
the oceans, the wind



and I'm beginning to think  
that we just keep doing it  
because we don't know how to stop  
and deep inside we feel the pain of  
all that we've killed  
and we try to control it by  
popping a chemical-filled pain-killer

we live through the guilt  
by taking caffeine, nicotine, morphine  
and we keep ourselves thin with saccharin  
and we keep ourselves sane with our alcohol poisoning  
and when that's not enough  
maybe a line of coke

maybe shoot ourselves in the head  
in front of the mirror in the master bedroom  
or maybe just take some pills  
walk into the garage, turn on the car  
and just  
fall asleep

in the wild  
you have no power over anyone else

now that we're civilized  
we create our own wild

maybe when we have all this power  
the only choice we have  
is to destroy ourselves

and so we do

Images by J. Kuypers. FC image: a street in Stockholm, Sweden. First poetry page (fct): Kuypers at a farm road in Urbana, Illinois (USA). The last poetry page (lbc): an image of J. Yotka walking on a street in Tallinn, Estonia. The BC: a stop sign ("PARE") on Santa Cruz Island (in the Galapagos Islands).

# once took POetry to the streets

Janet Kuypers

scars publications

cc&d

the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented literary and art magazine  
ccandd96@scars.tv <http://scars.tv>  
ISSN 1068-5154 INTERNET ISSN #1555-1555

Writings Copyright © 1980-2009 Janet Kuypers. Images Copyright © 1990-2007 Janet Kuypers. Design Copyright © 2009 Scars Publications and Design.

## other publications from Scars:

**Magazines:** *Children, Churches and Daddies* (cc&d magazine), founded June 1993; *Down in the Dirt*, conceived 1994, founded 2000

**Books:** *Hope Chest in the Attic*, *the Window*, *Close Cover Before Striking*, (Woman.), *Autumn Reason*, *Contents Under Pressure*, *the Average Guy's Guide (to Feminism)*, *Changing Gears*, *the Key to Believing*, *Domestic Blisters*, Etc., *Oeuvre*, *Exaro Versus*, *L'arte*, *The Other Side*, *The Boss Lady's Editorials*, *The Boss Lady's Editorials* (2005 Expanded Edition), *Duality*, *Seeing Things Differently*, *Change/Rearrange*, *Death Comes in Threes*, *Moving Performances*, *Six Eleven*, *Life at Cafe Aloha*, *Creams*, *Rough Mixes*, *The Entropy Project*, *The Other Side* (2006 Edition), *Stop.*, *Sing Your Life*, *The Beauty and the Destruction*, cc&d v167.5 (*Writing to Honour & Cherish*, editor edition), *Blister & Burn* (the Kuypers edition), S&M, cc&d v170.5 *Distinguished Writings* editor edition, *Living in Chaos*, *Silent Screams*, *Taking It All In*, *It All Comes Down*, *Rising to the Surface*, *Galapagos*, Chapter 38 (v1), *Finally*, *Literature for the Snotty and Elite* (v1), *Sulphur & Sawdust*, *Slate & Marrow*, *Blister & Burn*, *Rinse & Repeat*, *Survive & Thrive*, (not so) *Warm & Fuzzy*, *Torture & Triumph*, Oh., the *Elements*, *Side A/Side B*, *Balance*, *Chaos Theory*, *Writing To Honour & Cherish*, *Distinguished Writings*, *Breaking Silences*, *Unlocking the Mysteries*, *the Book of Scars*, *We The Poets*, *Life on the Edge*, *Revealing all your Dirty Little Secrets*, *Decrepit Remains*, *Charred Remnants*, *Hope & Creation*, *Bending the Curve*, *Layers of Creation*, *Dark Matter*, *Infamous in our Prime*, *Anais Nin*: an Understanding of her Art, *the Electronic Windmill*, *Changing Woman*, *the swan road*, *the Significance of the Frontier*, *the Svetasvatara Upanishad*, *Harvest of Gems*, *the Little Monk*, *Death in Málaga*, *Momento Mori*, *In the Palace of Creation*, R.I.P., *Bob the Bumble Bee*, *Remnants and Shadows*, *I Saw This*, *the Drive*, *Thomas at Tea*, *Crashing Down Nineteenth*, *Blue Collar Ballet*, *Hope & Creation*, *Bending the Curve*, *Layers of Creation*, *Dark Matter*, Chapter 38 (v1), *Finally*: *Literature for the Snotty and Elite* (v1).

**Compact Discs:** *Mom's Favorite Vase* the demo tapes, *Kuypers* the final (MFV Inclusive), *Weeds and Flowers* the beauty & the desolation, *The Second Axing* Something is Sweating, *The Second Axing* Live in Alaska, *Pettus & Kuypers* Live at Cafe Aloha, *Pointless Orchestra* Rough Mixes, *Kuypers* Seeing Things Differently, 5D/5D Tick Tock, *Kuypers* Change Rearrange, *Order From Chaos* The Entropy Project, *Kuypers* Six One One, *Kuypers* Stop., *Kuypers* Masterful Performances mp3 CD, *Kuypers* Death Comes in Threes, *Kuypers* Changing Gears, *Kuypers* Dreams, *Kuypers* How Do I Get There?, *Kuypers* Contact • Conflict • Control, *the DMJ Art Connection* the DMJ Art Connection, *Kuypers* Questions in a World Without Answers, *Kuypers* SIN, *Kuypers* WZRZ Radio (2 CD set), *Mom's Favorite Vase* and *The Second Axing* These Truths, assorted artists *String Theory*, Oh (audio CD), *Life At The Cafe* (3 CD set), *DMJ Art Connection* Indian Flux, *DMJ Art Connection* Manic Depressive or Something, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #1, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #2, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #3, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #4, *Chaotic Radio* Chaotic Radio Week #5, *Chaotic Radio* the Chaotic Collection Collection #01-05 (5 CD set) etc. (audio CD, 2 CD set), *Chaotic Elements* (2 CD set), *Chaos in Motion* (6 CD set), 5D/5D *Screaching to a Halt* (EP), *P&J* Two for the Price of One (EP), *Kiki*, *Jake and Haystack* An American Portrait, *Kuypers/the Bastard Trio/Paul Baker/the JoAnne Powlers Trio* Fusion (4 CD set).