



Taking Poetry  
to the Streets

Janet Kuypers poetry  
read outdoors 2008

Nashville  
New Orleans  
Naples

cc&d 2009 chapbook

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## 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

*Read in Nashville, TN at the Parthenon 12/21/08*

## Cast In Stone

I've searched a millenia for you  
and my love for you  
    will survive through the ages  
And if they cast us in stone  
it will only cement my love for you  
for all to see and admire  
because even if the elements  
    chip away our outer façades  
the marble will smooth in time  
and my soul will still flourish  
being frozen by your side.

*Read in Nashville, TN at the Parthenon 12/21/08*

## The Bridge To New Orleans

you have to pass the desolation  
before you get there  
long, long bridges  
overlooking swamps, decaying trees  
occasionally a home  
foundation crumbling  
wet wood peeling away

what do those people see  
the people in those homes  
crocodiles, snakes  
bugs along the water  
a ripple of the murky  
water under the full moon  
the vultures perched  
along the treetops

they have the isolation  
the beauty of the solitude  
but it's a different kind of  
decay they see  
a different kind of decay  
a different kind

*Read in New Orleans 12/22/08*

## Jackson Square/Bourbon Street

we'll read your palm  
we'll sketch your face  
we'll take you for a carriage ride

we'll pipe you full of liquor  
we'll give you naked women  
we'll make you happy

aren't you happy, friend

*Read in New Orleans 12/22/08*

## french quarter

blue dog  
red cat

painted faces  
shaping balloons

red dead crawfish  
staring from the plate

stumbling men  
streets filled with drink

painted women  
on display

there is no sleep  
but there are the streets

wear the mask  
at night

there are two choices  
for pleasure

go out or  
go to bed

*Read in New Orleans 12/22/08*

## Anything for the Liquor Fix

We've known people  
liked to have a bottle of wine  
with friends in the evenings,  
and we've known people  
who liked to go out for beers  
almost every night of the week.  
We've even known men in  
Illinois, where it's illegal  
to have open containers of  
alcohol in the car with them,  
who would leave a case of  
cheap beer at the passenger-  
side floor, so they could have  
a can of Milwaukee's Best  
while driving, and then toss  
the crushed can on the floor  
so they could throw it away  
when they got around to it.  
And we've known these people  
to want to save money  
on their wine, on their beer,  
on their hard liquors, so they  
would buy the cheapest liquor  
they could. We had even heard  
of a fad in Finland where teen girls  
soak their tampons in vodka,  
because the alcohol is absorbed  
into their system for intoxication  
without them drinking. Can you  
imagine teenage girls in Finland,  
getting drunk while in school?  
But the most drastic news story

came to us when we read of a  
young Canadian man, wanting  
to get drunk with no money,  
decided to mix gasoline with milk.  
This combination made him sick,  
where he then vomited. However,  
it appears that this milk-and-gas  
drink must have intoxicated him  
enough to not let him realize  
that he shouldn't have vomited  
into his fireplace in his house.  
The resulting explosion from his  
vomit and his fireplace fire  
burned his house down,  
killing both him and his sister.

*Read in New Orleans 12/22/08*



## 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.

*Read in New Orleans 12/22/08*

# Coquinas

1

I can't imagine  
the number of times  
I've been there

visiting Florida,  
Christmas with my parents  
a plastic tree  
decorated  
with sand dollars  
and red

ribbons

eating Christmas dinner  
listening to Johnny Mathis

and after the Irish coffee,  
father with his brandy snifter  
in hand  
mother and the other  
girls  
putting away the dishes

the carolers would come,  
walking in front of our home

singing "We wish you a  
merry Christmas"  
over and over again

we would walk outside  
and the cool breeze  
almost felt like Christmas  
after the hot

humid days

and we would stand on our driveway  
smile and nod

you could see down the road  
all the candles in  
paper bags  
lining the street

and for a few lights  
the bag

burned

2

and we would take  
boat rides  
off the coast  
my parents and their friends  
to a tiny island

dad drinking beer  
sometimes steering the boat  
control  
the women sitting together in the shade  
worrying about their hair

i would sit at the front  
sunglasses, swimsuit and sunburn  
feeling the wind  
slapping me  
in the face

and turning my head away from the boat  
into the wind  
away from them

to face it again

docking at a shoreline  
everyone jumping out  
little bags in their hands

the women go looking for shells  
the men go barbecue

after an hour or two  
the sandwiches, potato chips eaten  
the soda and beer almost  
gone

we turn around  
and head back

we have conquered

3

and I remember  
the coquinas

the little shells  
you could find them alive  
on the beaches north of the pier in  
Naples

going to the beach  
I would look for a spot  
to find them

they were all my own

they burrowed their way into the  
sand  
to avoid the light  
worming their way away from me

I unearthed a group of coquinas once,  
fascinated with their color of  
their shells, the way  
they moved

before they could hide

I collected them  
in a jar,  
took them home with me

what did you teach me  
what have you taught me to do  
is this it  
is this what it has become  
is this what has become of me  
of you of us

and I took them home

I added salt water and sand  
but I couldn't feed them  
I realized soon that they  
would die

so I let them

*Read in Naples Florida 12/25/08*

## As I Recovered

I was supposed to be  
saving a life by turning the wheels  
and avoiding an accident. Well,  
I did. I turned the wheels  
and that saved the other driver's life.  
Since my wheels were turned I was  
pushed into oncoming traffic  
so another car could hit me,  
i think the first car hitting me was  
enough, but while we're at it, let's  
get someone else to hit the car as well,  
well as I was saying since  
another car could and did hit me  
they decided while they hit my car that  
they would push me over 100 feet. That's  
what I got for saving a life.

In the hospital, after I  
got out of the coma, no one  
even visited me. Oh, I know my  
family was there and it would have been more  
depressing if they couldn't have been  
there for me, but when I say no one  
visited me, I mean no one that did this to me  
visited me. Not the people  
who hit me, not the guy  
who's life I saved. None of  
those people even attempted to  
pay me back. For my car,  
or my time, or my coma, or my  
feeling that this is natural, yet even  
for being nice. I have the  
physical scars and the  
emotional scars from that  
accident and from that day. And  
no one ever apologized to me  
for the pain they caused No one  
even visited me as I recovered.

*Read at a Florida gas station 12/27/08*

# Republican

I walked with you  
and it seemed like we walked for hours  
and it seemed strange  
walking  
trying to stretch the conversation  
trying not to think  
that you were not the one

when you jokingly pushed me  
and I grabbed your arm  
you pulled me back  
and held me close  
and I didn't know what to think  
I felt our hands together  
and I didn't know if it was right

and when we sat  
in the park  
I didn't know what to expect  
as we sat there  
and talked  
about the future  
the past  
and republicans

my mind was so confused

and when we sat in my room  
I tried to think  
about what I was doing  
but I didn't know  
I didn't know  
if I was trying to get something  
I didn't want  
I didn't know  
if I should bother  
or if I just didn't care

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## Photograph, Nineteenth Century

that woman that picture  
the images of beauty and softness  
of something that shouldn't be touched  
that couldn't work that can't work  
the sepia toning oh how ancient  
oh the dependency oh the degradation

my mind has been cluttered  
society's a bastard  
I can't see the women  
I see the hat the feather  
the adornments of beauty  
the preposterous impractical way  
she has been made to be seen  
and not heard

she's only an image  
she was forced with an image  
is it a shame is it a sin  
and now I've been tainted  
with the knowledge of society  
with the knowledge of it's motives  
and now I can't even see the beauty  
I can only see the oppression

"oh, it's not like that anymore" they say  
as I wipe the make-up off my eyelids  
and wonder who I'm trying to impress

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*



## Father's Tears

I never really knew him.  
I knew the smell of his work boots  
from the construction site,  
I knew the smell of the martinis  
waiting for him at home.  
I knew the sound of his walk:  
his ankles cracking,  
his keys rattling.  
I knew the sternness of his voice,  
and I knew  
that around me  
he only smiled for photographs.

Emotions had their place for him.  
He reserved happiness for friends,  
anger for home.  
In everything he did and felt  
he showed strength and power.

I've seen him cry twice.

Once he cut his hand with a saw.  
I saw fabric four inches thick  
soaked with blood around his hand.  
I saw the drops of blood on the car seat.  
He drove himself to the hospital.  
He was always in control.  
But I heard the tears of pain in his voice.  
I stood in the driveway and cried.

Once I heard him arguing with a friend.  
I heard his voice from the hallway,  
but I didn't recognize his voice at all:  
it sounded confused, weak. Distraught.  
I walked up to the door,  
looking through the square window.  
His voice choked and gasped.  
The muscles in his face were contorted,  
and it was as if the wrinkles  
in his eyebrows cried,  
"How could you hurt me so?  
How could you do this to me?"  
It was as if he screamed at being weak.

I moved away from the door  
before he could see me. But I still  
heard his voice; I had to run outside.

I think I didn't want to believe  
that he was human.

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## The Joshua Tree

The Joshua tree  
is a tree with long branches  
said to point toward  
the Promised land

You remind me of  
the Joshua tree  
because you help me  
and lead me  
in the right direction

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## When I Am Weak

There are many times when I am weak  
My poor legs can no longer endure  
I start to fall

I search for something to hold on to  
and usually I find something to lean on  
until I am no longer weak

But there are times when there is  
nothing for me to  
grab on to

I feel lost

I continue to fall

But then I see you

You extend your arm and uncurl your  
fingers

You reach out to me and give me support

You help me become strong again

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## No Longer Pity You

Stop singing that song to me  
I can no longer pity you  
The words are hollow  
And only echo in the past

You don't know what they mean  
You can't know

It is not your luck that has turned you  
It is your inability and unwillingness  
To live

And yet you have Turned  
And I can no longer pity you

That song has no meaning anymore

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## Signs of the Times

The president says it's okay  
to be gay, as long as you don't  
tell anyone. Suburban husbands  
are murdering doctors who work  
at abortion clinics, because they  
saved the world from a mass murderer.  
Nineteen children are found in a  
freezing apartment alone, sharing  
one bowl of food on the floor with  
a dog. People walk to the churches,  
see Mary's statue crying. One lone  
man in New York hears the voice  
of God through his dog and kills.

Were the children saved from the  
murderer, were they sharing their  
food with God were they crying

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## A Stand-Off

Too many things bombard us  
we scan from channel to channel  
eyes darting, first war, destruction,  
then a weight loss commercial.  
I know you're thinking society is  
ludicrous - and it is - but don't you see  
that when I watch that t.v. screen  
all I see is that I'm not thin enough?  
I've tried to make things right with  
us. I've tried to bring us one glimmer  
of happiness, I've tried to turn off  
that media mudslinging  
tried to make things a little better  
even if it is only in our bedroom  
and even if it is only for one night.  
And you, you look away  
and think I'm hopeless. I'm grasping  
at whatever straws are left.

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## 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

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*



## Rape Education 3

I told a friend  
that I worked for  
acquaintance rape action groups

she told me she tried  
to start a group of her own  
at her college

her catholic college

and they told her she wasn't allowed  
to do it  
because acquaintance rape  
is not a problem  
here

she tried to write an article  
about it for her paper  
they wouldn't print it

what else was she supposed to do

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## 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

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## 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

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## 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

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## My Life Changing

When he wanted something  
wanted something from her  
and he always asked her

and you know now, now that I  
think about it, he never knew to ask  
and he never knew how to want  
and she never knew how to answer  
and this was their little world

and this was how they argued  
and she was always right  
and she always wanted to argue

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## 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

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

## Mean to Me

i ain't got no money  
and nothing's for free

how many times are you  
going to pull on me

what do you have to give me  
what do you expect of me

when I've got nothing  
what are you supposed  
to mean to me

*Read in New Orleans 12/28/08*

# Taking Poetry to the Streets

Janet Kuypers

scarsuonpeagqnd

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## 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 Malaga*, *Memento Mori*, *In the Palace of Creation*, *R.I.P.*, *Bob the Bumble Bee*, *Remnants and Shadows*, *I Saw This*, *the Drive*, *Thoma at Tea*, *Crashing Down Nineteenth*, *Blue Collar Ballet*, *Hope & Creation*, *Bending the Curve*, *Layers of Creation*, *Dark Matter*, *Chaoter 38* (v1), *Finally: Literature for the Snotty and Elite* (v1).

**Compact Discs:** *Mom's Favorite Vase* the demo tapes, *Kuypers* the final (MPV 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*, *SD/SD* *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* *WZRD 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), *SD/SD* *Screaming to a Halt* (EP), *PBJ* *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).