

Astronomy 101

The graphic features the word "Astronomy" in a white, sans-serif font at the top. Below it, the number "101" is rendered in a large, white, outlined font. The central "0" is replaced by a circular image of a teal-colored moon, showing its craters and surface texture. The entire composition is set against a dark, starry background.

Janet Kuypers 07/19/11 feature chapbook

Orion

Winter evenings I would look for you.
Dancing along the horizon. You were
always fighting; the great bear to the
north, the bull in the winter.

You were my favorite. whenever I
could I would look for you: out my
window, in my driveway. I remember
a nebula lived in the center of your sword.

You, spending millennia fighting. You
have taught me well. The other night, I
looked out my window again; you were
there, possibly receiving strength from me,
as I did so many years in you.

I have written about the constellation Orion, and

Envision It in the Night Sky

it occurred to me
that when you see these stars
in constellations in the night sky,
they're not right next to each other...

the closest star to our own
is one hundred light years away
i mean, there's an entire nebula
representing one of the stars
in the sword of Orion.

If you moved away from our planet,
the whole concept of constellations
as we know it
would be lost:
nothing in the Universe
would appear as we envision it
in the night sky.

Travel Through Space

based on 2004 prose written for her show "Questions in a World Without Answers"

I love travel,
and
I love astronomy

I've got a star named after me,
my name was on a CD
on the Deep Impact Spacecraft
that collided with Comet Tempel in 2005

I love outer space so much,
but I don't think I'll actually
go
into outer space

And then it occurred to me:
I have

consider this:
all radio signals are shot out into space,
they continue past our earth

I've been on WEFT, WZRD,
WLUW, WSUM, WLS, even Q101

I wonder how far my voice has traveled
into outer space by now

and consider this:
all television programs are shot into outer space, too
these signals get to the people on earth,
but these signals continue to travel
towards the ends of the universe

I've been on CBS news
I've had poetry videos on television stations
in Nashville and Chicago
I've even danced on CAN-TV

I wonder what other stars
have seen my poetry by now

I wonder if anything out there
can decode our signals
and understand what we're trying to tell them

Moonlight / the Moon

Moonlight is a hypnotist
putting people in a trance

Whenever you look at the moon
moonlight takes over your soul

Nobody can stop it
but no one wants to

From Orpheus to Nuking the Moon

based on 2005 prose pieces "How Do I Get to the Moon" and
"the Moon & Astronomy Talk" written for her show "How Do I Get There?"

scientists have have come up with theories
in guessing how this planet got a moon
that it may have formed off a collision
with a rogue planet they call Orpheus
and that when the moon first formed
it was much, much closer to Earth
than it is today
that it may have been only 14,000 miles away
and not at it's current almost 240,000 mile distance

NASA's Artist-in-Residence Laurie Anderson
learned from scientists at NASA
that during the cold war
they considered setting off nuclear bombs
on the dark side of the moon

because, you see,
no one *sees* that side of the moon

but ast ronomers now estimate
that because of gravity's change
the moon
every year
is a mile and a half farther away from the earth

If you remember the moon
looking so big
when you looked at it in the night sky
when you were younger
well,
you may have been right

Universe... Now In Color

so I heard the NASA artist in residence
talk about the images we see from Hubble
and I've seen these telescope photos
the colors from galaxy clusters and nebulas
is mind-boggling

but they explained that when images come in
they are all digital
a series of ones, a series of zeros
and there's no color in the images at all

I mean, astronauts describe outer space
as an amazingly vast black void

so when people get the data from these images
they imagine the heat radiating from these objects

I mean, you know,
red is hot
blue is cold

that they think about what looks best for the images

and I thought
hmmm

but you know, this cluster looks perfect in pink
and I think this galaxy should really be red
this gamma ray burst looks great in green
the clouds around this orange nebula look better in blue
let's even show these planetary rings in green and purple

I mean really, this is what they do?

i know these images in outer space are beautiful
but I didn't know that they literally were an art form

Hubble takes pictures of objects in space
with different filters to capture light rays
the human eye can't see
so when we get final full color images from Hubble
they are nothing like what the Universe really is

outer space:
abstract art

maybe imaging astronomy
is actually
existential art

Eleven and Two, plus Eight

maybe I'm an observer
like an astronomer
looking out into the universe
trying to understand what makes everything
everything

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

you know, 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

but molecule by molecule,
we originate from stars

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 of 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 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 we've looked at Venus through our telescope
and I've watched you photograph Orion in the night sky

so with these observations,
I thee wed
because after all of my searching throughout the universe
I've found what I've been looking for



Janet Kuypers
<http://www.janetkuypers.com>

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ccandd96@scars.tv

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