



hmmm

JANET KUYPERS

POEM PERFORMANCE

MUSIC BY JOHN YOTKO & THE

HAI!MAN OF SOUTH AFRICA

LIVE AT THE CAFÉ IN CHICAGO

20111120

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bio

Janet Kuypers is a professional performance artist, a writer, photographer, and a literary magazine editor, while running Scars Publications, which hosts two literary magazines, publishes books and releases CDs. She has had 71 books published (as of 11/20/11, of poetry, prose, novels and art), has sung in 3 acoustic bands, and worked with 8 music groups (combining her poetry with music. In 2010 she began hosting a weekly Chicago open mic at *the Café* with weekly podcasts. Her CD releases (41 in 2011) appear at iTunes and other online vendors, and she also produced a monthly podcast and an Internet radio station (2005-2009), found on line through <http://scars.tv> or <http://www.janetkuypers.com>.



Due to page layouts, these writings are not in the order they were performed in. Following is the order the writings were performed: here is me, Upstage Everyone Else, Painted Buddhas, letter 09/16/06, Became a Jungle, refuse in a single church, Beauty in the Eyes of Einstein, In The Projects, eternal struggle, that's from the barbed wire, carrying me through, You've Killed Me, On a High Horse Like This, Mad Any Difference.

here is me

i have a secret
i have an awful secret
and i can't tell anyone

you see, my life
would fall apart
if anyone knew

everyone thinks
i'm someone different
but here is me

hmmm

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Upstage Everyone Else

you wake up in the morning
clean yourself up
take the commute
figure out what you're supposed to do
go through all the motions
take your lunch break
feel dreary
keep up with the schedule
make it home
screw making dinner
there's gotta be some leftovers in the fridge
then go to a bar,
watch a movie
or just sit at home awith some beer
and leave it at that
before you do it again
tomorrow
and again tomorrow
and again tomorrow

that's what it always is, you know
we're all in this cycle
we're all on this racetrack
there's this goal we all keep going toward
get married
get the house
churn out the kids
make a ton of money
buy the nice cars
wear the big jewels
go on the fancy trips
upstage everyone else

it's like we're all on this racetrack
like
we're a donkey
and someone is dangling this carrot in front of us

to keep us moving

so this is what we do

we see the commercials on tee vee
we see what we have
and we become dissatisfied

so we see that carrot
dangling in front of us
always just out of reach

so this is what we do
we stay in this cycle
and we trudge forward
on the only track we know

I finally decided to look at this cycle
look at what I'm doing

and I saw the carrot

and the donkey was dead

and I thought

hmmm

Painted Buddhas

when in Beijing
I saw a wooden wall
with many rows
of tiny
sculpted
painted Buddhas
some Buddhas
had their heads torn off
& I thought
hmmm

Became a Jungle

he wanted plants around
he wanted something living
& since my mom died
my home has become a jungle
because I don't want anything to die

letter 09/16/06

I just played gin with my dad for the first time ever. All my life I remembered mom and dad playing gin with another couple coming over, playing at our poker table, and I learned how to play, it's kind of like rummy... I don't think I ever played gin with my parents, but I knew *how* to play it, and I probably played with my sister (I can't really remember). Now all I do is teach my husband to play gin when we're together and want to spend time doing something other than watching tv. But when we play and don't keep track of the score, we call all the time, because why not? It's just a game, right?

Anyway, I asked my dad after mom died if he wanted to play gin, because he *played* cards with people before, when people hadn't died yet. But now they play pinochle, and I don't know pinochle... But anyway, I've asked dad a few times if maybe he'd want to play gin, and he always says no. Yesterday even, he was playing a computer game, and I offered to play a game of gin with him, and still he said no. But today, my second to last day visiting him, he was playing a computer game and I thought, okay, I get into a rut, and they say I'm like him, so I should take some initiative. So I went and got a deck of cards and sat down next to him and just started shuffling. And he finally paused long enough from playing computer solitaire to see what I was doing, and I said, "I got a deck of cards. Want to play a game of gin?" and he said, "let me finish what I was doing, and okay." So I kept shuffling until he was finished playing, and dealt.

I actually ginned the first game, when I got the winning card from his discard I said, "I'm sorry, but gin," and then we played again, he called and beat me because I had absolutely nothing in my hand. And then we played a few more hands and then he said he was wanted to watch the game on tv, so we stopped playing after about 4 or 5 games.

And I talked to my husband on the phone long distance afterward, and I said that this was probably the first time in my life I ever played gin with my father.

Interesting. I learned this game from my father, without him trying to teach me, and this was the first time I had ever played gin with him. Interesting.

refuse in a single church

(with adapted lines from Packing and Russians at a Garage Sale)

walked into a church one Saturday
when all the property on their land
was converted for a weekend rummage sale

churchgoers donated their belongings
their refuse, the things they didn't want anymore
got their tax forms from the church
so their acts of kindness
won't cost them so much

and there were rows and rows of trinkets
half an aisle of appliances, half an aisle of glassware
someone else would pick up a wine glass. "how much?"
"twenty-five cents." "how about ten?"

"how much for this iron?" one would ask.
a church lady would answer, "four dollars."
"fifty cents?" "no."

someone would point at the iron, a toaster,
a blender. "all for a dollar?" "no."
And I thought, hmmm,

as I looked at the appliances
and thought about the appliances I donated
to a church for their annual rummage sale last year.

half the place had hanging clothes
and there were grocery bags available at the front
“fill a bag with clothes for two dollars”

hmmm, maybe I’ll look for men’s button-down shirts
look for anything like a classic white shirt
but of course, those were never donated

this is everyone’s refuse
rows of dresses, pairs of shoes,
pairs of shorts, shirts, loneliness,
anger, belts, jewelry, extra socks

it’s amazing how much refuse
you can find in a single church

Beauty in the Eyes of Einstein

I heard NASA scientists say
that Einstein dismissed some of his theories

even some theories we may know all too well

but Einstein didn't like some of his theories
because he thought they weren't beautiful

and I wonder:
what is beauty

is it the geomagnetic aberrations
of the Aurora Borealis
dancing along the horizon
at the arctic circle

is it the way you look at me
with those gorgeous doe eyes
after we've been apart so long

is it the scattered collisions from comet
Shoemaker Levy-9 into the planet Jupiter

is it what I feel
when your arms are finally around me
and I don't want to open my eyes
and I never want to let go

is it the eternally changing
whisps of volcanic trails
in the Saturn moon Titan's atmosphere

is it the way that listening
to the music you make
fills me with such energy

or is it converting matter into pure energy
with just the right formula

Einstein believed
“The most beautiful thing
we can experience
is the mysterious.
It is the source
of all art and science.”

so am I driven
to look up at the stars in the night sky
to see stars from billions of years ago
to fall in love every night

Einstein reminds us,
“We are all ruled
in what we do
by impulses”

so is it how on impulse
I move a bit closer to you
so I can feel the heat from your body
so close to mine

we ask, what is beauty

they say beauty is in the eye of the beholder
so it makes me wonder

In The Projects

I saw a woman in the projects, by the apartments you were looking at. I was driving toward the lake, stuck at the intersection in traffic, and she walked across the street, in front of my car. She was wearing a black jacket, falling off of one shoulder. She was wearing a black and white striped shirt. She was carrying a clear plastic cup in her left hand, like the kind you get in a bar. It was filled a quarter of the way with beer. And she walked across the street, holding her beer at the end of her straight left arm, and the sleeve of her jacket almost covered her hand. And her eyes darted back and forth, as if she knew she wasn't supposed to have open alcohol in public but she'd do it anyway, not caring for the law, but still being cautious. And I thought: I've done that before. We both have things we're running from. What makes her, in the projects, living off the government, any different from me, in the ugly new houses, living off someone else's ideals.

Made Any Difference

So I'm at my bar my favorite hang-out
I just overheard from people talking

that another guy who's always here
in the past few months has had a few strokes

now, this is grapevine I just heard snippets
but I needed to see him put in my two cents

he went out for a smoke and even though I don't
I walked up to him after he lit up

I reached my hand out toward his cigarette
he offered me a new one but... I wanted his

then holding his smoke I told him I heard
I spoke of his wife asked about his kids

and I don't want to get on a high horse
but we care for him we want him happy

he said I was right he'll take some time off
then he saw his smoke said that he should quit

handed me the smoke and then walked away

I stood there a while sucking nicotine
wondering if I made any difference

that's from the barbed wire

she had skin of silk
smooth and strong
beautiful to touch

with silk around you
you always get warm
 feel warm
you can't escape it

I watched her skin
her silken exterior
and saw occasional rips
 small spare tears
with little dots of blood
tracing the edges

I had to ask

and she told me
"oh,
that's from the barbed wire"

and I suddenly
internally panicked
what did they do to her
how did they hurt her
...or was she trying
to escape
their potential torture

how could they destroy
this silken beauty
how —

then I wondered
where the barbed wire
was
I wondered where
the torture was

and then I wondered
if the barbed wire
was inside her
trying to tear her
silk
trying to break its way
out

eternal struggle

Grey is the eternal struggle
Between what is
White and
Black

Good and
Evil

Light and
Dark

It's always an eternal struggle

carrying me through

This body
I am trapped in
Is only
Carrying my soul
Through

Through the hatred
The deception
The turmoil

Through it all

You've Killed Me

you've killed me, you know
and I can no longer respond

come to me
I dare you
open my eyelid
shine a light on my face
put that flashlight
right up to my eye

see if I respond

you've killed me, you know

they've placed me
in a hospital bed
everyone's crossing
their fingers

this is what it all boils down to
this is what it all becomes

you know you've killed me
but still
you still
are
waiting for me to respond

On a High Horse Like This

I listened to a hunter from Africa
say
“all life is sacred”

and he said that after separating
a small, thin, non-venomous snake
from around a large African hawk-like bird’s neck

because you see, the bird attacks snakes,
but that snake couldn’t eat the large bird once it died:
that would have been a senseless death.

“all life is sacred,” you say.
so I couldn’t help but think:
as a hunter, do you pray for the sacred dead

after you killed it?

I mean, I don’t usually vocalize
when I’m on a high horse like this

and I’ve had to explain myself
to meat eaters:
no these aren’t leather shoes

I wear; I’m a vegetarian.
though I still have to feign a smile
to commiserate with men eating slaughtered

animal. cause you see, I’d look like a fool
for having beliefs. people don’t want to hear about
a moral choice different from their own.

I mean, we’re Americans,
if it’s not human,
or maybe a dog or a cat, eat it. it’s that simple.

###

but I married a hunter
a marine who served our country
and he told me

that every time he killed an animal
a part of him felt a regretful twinge of pain
when he killed his prey.

the prey that he searched for.
with a weapon he could use
before anything got close enough

to be an enemy.

oh, I'm sorry.
I'm getting on my high horse again.

it's convenient that people
can get their kill from the grocery store
without getting any blood

on their hands.
anything to stop everyone from thinking
about what they're doing.

because I've heard that killing something
makes you feel something.
And I thought:

hmmmm janet kuypers

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Compact Discs: *Men's Favorite Hise the damn poets, Kuypers the final (MP3 inclusive), Wands and Flowers the beauty & the desolation, The Second Asking Something is Sweating, The Second Asking Live in Alaska, Petros & Kuypers Live at Cafe Aloha, Pointless Orchestra Rough Mixes, Kuypers Seeing Things Differently, 50/50 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 Control + Conflict + Control, the DMJ Art Connection the DMJ Art Connections, Kuypers Questions in a World Without Answers, Kuypers 50M, Kuypers WERD Radio (2 CD set), Men's Favorite Hise and the Second Asking These Trivels, assorted artist Spring Theory, Oh (audio CD), Life in The Cafe (3 CD set), the DMJ Art Connection Indian Flux, the DMJ Art Connection Mass Depressive or Something, Classic Radio Classic Radio Week #1, Classic Radio/Classic Radio Week #2, Classic Radio/Classic Radio Week #3, Classic Radio/Classic Radio Week #4, Classic Radio/Classic Radio Week #5, Classic Radio the Classics Collection Collection #0185 (5 CD set) etc. (audio CD, 2 CD set), *Classic Elements (2 CD set), 50/50 Searching to a Hub (EP), P&L Two for the Price of One (EP), P&L, Jade and Haystack An American Paradox, Kuypers/The Boatyard Trio/Paul Baker/the Julianne Powders Trio Fusion (4 CD set), podcasts the Evolution of Performance Art (13 CD set), Kuypers Live (14 CD set), the DMJ Art Connection the Things They Did to You (2 CD set), Kuypers Seeing a Psychiatrist (3 CD set), Kuypers St. Paul's (3 CD set), Kuypers the 2009 Poetry Game Show (3 CD set), Kuypers and the Hitman of South Africa Burn Through Me (2 CD set), Kuypers "40" (amazon.com release), Kuypers Sessions and Other Stories (amazon.com release), Kuypers the Stories of Women (amazon.com release).**