

Who What Where When Why

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release

Poetry written in the Southern Hemisphere
and classic writing about peace & life today
in the 2017 Janet Kuypers final Bahá'í feature



Janet Kuypers

Janet Kuypers poetry show/performance
at the Bahá'í Center Saturday 12/2/17 after 6pm in Austin

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jk bio: Chicago poet Janet Kuypers is a professional performance artist, a writer, photographer, as well as a professional literary magazine editor while running **Scars Publications** (<http://scars.tv>), which published two literary magazines (*cc&d* and *Down in the Dirt*), publishes books and releases CDs. With over 90 books published (as of 11/17 of poetry, prose, novels and art), she has sung in 3 acoustic bands, and worked with 8 music groups (combining her poetry with music). From 2010-2015 she hosted a Chicago open mic, *the Café Gallery*, with a weekly podcast. Her CD releases (40+ since 2012) appear at iTunes and other online vendors, found on line through her site at <http://www.janetkuypers.com> or <http://scars.tv>. Residing in Austin Texas since 10/15, Kuypers performed monthly poetry/music/performance art shows at Austin's the Bahá'í Faith Center through 12/17 and reads in monthly book reading features at Half Price Books, and assorted individual poetry features at various additional Austin Texas locations.

<http://www.facebook.com/janetkuypers> <http://www.youtube.com/ccandd96>
<http://twitter.com/janetkuypers> <http://twitter.com/JKPoetryVine>

Who What Where When Why

Janet Kuypers

11/23/17 (leaving Antarctica, crossing the Drake Passage)

Who.

British explorers, then others,
looking for more ways to expand.

What.

They traveled farther than anyone
and discovered a cold, remote land.

Where.

As far south
as their ships could take them.

When.

Maybe two centuries ago.

Why.

To discover new land to claim,
and more animals to slaughter
for food and oil.

—

And in this unclaimed land,
ships from different countries came —

it was bitter cold, some died in their quest,
but they thought they found a natural treasure.

Giant whales were everywhere, so
slaughter anything you can find, get it to

the whaling ships to extract
the blubber and use for oil.

And there are so many seals here,
large animals that haven't learned to fear us yet.

So with their impunity dozens of species
were almost completely decimated. What a treasure.

—

Who.
Twelve countries.
Eventually more than eighty,
but I think some were just trying to stake their claim.

What.
They signed an agreement
to make this one foreign continent
exist for maybe research, but only peace.

Where.
At the southern pole,
where days last half a year
and nights give us the Aurora Australis.

When.
Just over half a century ago,
when we realized we had to save
what we almost destroyed. And let it thrive.

Why.
Because when humans come
to a new place, the first thing we bring is battle.
So if we promise to leave it alone, maybe,

maybe peace can truly exist somewhere on planet Earth.

Ocean's Call to Dive

Janet Kuypers

11/24/17 (on flight from Ushuaia to R. o Gallegos)

the Gentoo penguins run down the mountain
to the rocky edge overlooking the southern ocean
they get into a single-file line at the edge
one jumps in
then another
then another
then a dozen more

the last penguin in the line gets to that edge
after all the other penguins dove into the southern ocean

the last penguin steps back and forth on his feet in place
turns around
looks at the mountain
turns back to the water
rocks once
steps in place twice
looks back again
then turns to the salt water and dives in



Underwater and Swimming

Janet Kuypers
11/24/17 (in R. o Gydegas)

swimming with my best friend
in a pool in the summertime,
diving down in the deep end,
flipping and springing to the sky

could never compare to seeing
Gentoo penguins, stocky birds
actually swimming like porpoises
underwater, then springing so high

from the water, where we sat at the shoreline
after watching the penguins dive in
to the Southern Ocean's frigid salt water
group together, and then spring away

like watching birds in flight, in formation
we'd watch six or eight of these birds
all spring up in the water together
just to porpoise together in sync

I think of my friend now, how we swam
near the Great Lakes, south of the North Pole.
And now, at the other side of the world
I see it's part of the beautiful whole

on the Bridge

Janet Kuypers

11/24/17 (in P. o. Galapagos)

the Captain invited us onto the bridge
and we cautiously walked, and watched
the majestic view from the front of the ship
searching for what was yet to be found

but lucky us, crewmates saw it —
the first Humpback whales of the season
so the Captain gently slowed the ship down
just to try to glide alongside

and maybe the whales were as curious as we
because after a few minutes of gliding
three Humpback whales came along beside
trying to learn what we might be hiding

our intentions were pure, but maybe they knew
we would never be truly alike
so they blew from their blowholes, curled with their fins
and with their tails, they turned the other way

yes, it's true, we're not alike
they turned backward as we moved ahead
but I think we both learned from each other
and we grew through our final goodbye

I was honored to be on the bridge that day
I was honored he gave us that chance
to commune with something so different from us
that helps, in a way, makes us the same

Jumping, Flying

Janet Kuypers
11/15/17 (Buenos Aires)

When I took over the cockpit controls
I feared the airplane would fight me back,
that gravity would take me to a tumble.

But the skies were sunny, the air was clear
and once my hands took over the job
of piloting that plane, this behemoth

seemed to purr like a kitten, and it was like
I was six years old again riding a bike,
'cuz you never forget the feeling

of holding onto that handlebar,
and giving yourself the power
to take you wherever you want to go.

Like a conductor, I directed that airplane
above the clouds, seeing the winding streets
below no wider than strands of hair.

Wonder if I could see the Everglades... And
you may ask: why do this? Because I can. If I choose,
I can take flight like a bird and touch the sky.

#



Once I sat in an airplane that had no door,
looked at the altimeter attached to my harness,
saw this craft rising over 17 thousand feet.

Just about 5 hundred feet to go, I think,
and my stomach starts to feel queasy
but others are there to join in and even film it.

Beforehand I was told that if I was enjoying
jumping out of an airplane, to do jazz hands
for the cameraman. So I jumped, I fell,

I couldn't breathe, but I didn't forget
to do jazz hands, even though jazz hands
in free-fall at one hundred twenty miles per hour

looks more like experimental dance — or convulsions.
Pull the rip cord, See some of the Rockies from above,
get a free beer from the Left-Handed Ale

brewery for making the jump. But even
the cameraman asked me after I was done,
'What on Earth were you doing?' and really,

if you think about it, why on earth do I do this?
Because I can. 'Cuz with every leap I'll take,
I'll always land on my feet, and keep looking to the sky.



Only Voice He Could Hear

Janet Kuypers

11/15/17 (Buenos Aires and in flight to Ushuaia)

When I was ten, I was the Queen
of Hawaii in a school play. Other students
in my court kneeled around me, then dancers
entertained us, all while I sat at my throne.

I took advanced classes, was even a “Tough Ten”
speller; could spell the longest word
in the English dictionary, pneumomoultra-
microscopic silico volcano coniosis. At this point,

I thought I could do anything... So I
learned a little French, but I don't know,
I must have missed my petit déjeuner
because I was feeling a bit peckish

and wanted something more. I joined choir,
even sang at my graduation ceremony
with classmates before I went to high school.
Because even at the ripe old age of thirteen

I wanted to live by those words
in the song we sung: Climb every mountain,
forge every stream, follow every
rainbow, 'til you find your dream...

'Til you find your dream.

Before the final graduation ceremony
an older man in a suit emblazoned
with medals and ribbons from the
American Legion came to the stage

to award one student in the entire school
with the American Legion Award —
which seemed like the highest honor
anyone could ever achieve. And when

they said my first name, I wondered,
there's another student in this school
with my first name, how did they win?
Because I couldn't believe it when they

said my last name, and I walked
on to the stage to get my medal
from what I was sure was the nicest
man I had ever met in my entire life.

Once graduation ended and I saw
my family, my father said to me
that during the choir performance,
I was the only voice he could hear.

Passport to Outer Space

Janet Kuypers

writing in 2007 for the 11/19/07 Chicago performance art show "Living in a Big World"

A lot of us have experiences around the city, and I've tried to see the world, not just this continent, but 15 European countries, the Galapagos Islands, Russia, China, India, South America, Antarctica...

I've searched for these stories around the world, I've gotten my passport stamped like mad... but my sister told me about Don Stump, a friend of my dad's who ran a restaurant, well, his father-in-law apparently bought and had the rights to the space *in outer space* (you know, like all of the space beyond our atmosphere between planets and stars and comets and asteroids and stuff...). My sister even said that his father-in-law stamped the passports of the astronauts that went into outer space, since they were crossing the areas he owned.

But Don Stump was pushed away from their house once, because at least two men from the FBI were there... Apparently Don's father-in-law was minting coins, it wasn't money that was valid anywhere, but it's illegal for U.S. residents to try to make any sort of profit this way.

Now, Don and his wife and parents have passed away, so.... I guess there's no way I can pay them for having my passport stamped for going to outer space. But when you're up high in the Earth's atmosphere, a lot of places look the same. I mean, Siberia, with snow peaks and mountain lines along the eastern coast, looks like the Rockies in America in the winter. It's only when you get closer to the ground do you see the real differences.

Visiting Pristine Places on the Planet

Janet Kuypers

11/21/17 (Antarctica, by Whaler's Harbour)

When I was young, the world
was the size of a thimble, and all
I needed was my own back yard.
But on my own, I was a dot in the
Universe. And *that* had to change.

So after trying to climb one of the
Alps wearing socks and sandals,
I went to a nearby mountain to spend
20 minutes in its radon-filled cave
to try to gain my strength again.

After reading Hitler's concentration camp
gates in Dachau, Arbeit Mach Frei,
I walked through those gates, and thought.
Work will set you free. Yes, it's true, I know it.
Because *your* choice and *your* drive *is* freedom.

After singing an entire acoustic concert
at a bar in Fairbanks Alaska, we took off
after midnight, added extra layers and
stood outside in the cold to bask in the geo-
magnetic dance of the Aurora Borealis.

After being stared at by men in India
because I was a tall Western woman
not dressed like a Muslim, I had to go
to their iron-filled, human feces-filled
Bay of Bengal, just to get my feet wet.

After stepping over gold-covered risers
in palaces in China's Forbidden City,
an older Chinese man asked me in halted
English where I was from. When I said
Chicago, he joyously said "My Kind of Town."

After I sang at the Great Wall of China,
a group of Chinese people asked to
take a picture with me. But I don't think
it was my singing, but the fact that I
was a least a foot taller than all of them.

After buying a balalaika in St. Petersburg,
I saw the alarming number of well-armed
Russian guards at ever street corner.
And I thought: we will never be friends, but
at times like these, we'll try to be friendly.

After retracing Darwin's Steps
at the Galapagos Islands,
I stopped near the crisscrossed
overlapping Sea Lions napping —
so I could contemplate natural selection.

After seeing destroyed British ships
from early whaling in Antarctica,
I photographed the first Humpback whales
of the season, then took a picture with
a Gentoo penguin as I sat in the snow

and the penguin approached me.

When a man in the 3rd poorest country
in the world was asked why the poor locals
seemed so happy, he explained.
We may not have it all, but we can
choose to be happy. And so we do.

And with these words, I proudly
choose life — I choose life for the Orcas
and Humpback whales, the Chin Strap
and Gentoo penguins, Cormorants, Gulls
and Terns. I choose life for Giant petrels,

Storm petrels, Finches, Nasca birds, even
Sea Lions and Marine Iguanas. I choose life
for the Wyoming bison who passed me on the street.
I choose life for the deer who approached us
as we slept in the grass under stars.

I choose life for all the mass-farmed
animals mankind slaughters because they
choose to consume violence and not peace.
I choose life, because all around the world,
peace is the one thing we could *all* always use.



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