

THE WORKS OF A WRITER TAKEN AS A WHOLE



OEUVRE

SCARS PUBLICATIONS
& PENNY DREADFUL PRESS

1979-2004
25-YEAR POETRY COLLECTION
JANET KUYPERS

Oeuvre
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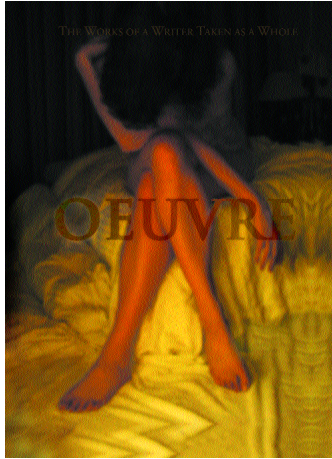
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Information about past books is available upon request through Scars Publications and Design. Materials from the literary magazines "Children, Churches and Daddies" and "Down in the Dirt" are available on line at <http://scars.tv>, as are .mp3 files, .ra files, .aif files, .au files, .wav files .mov and mpeg files of Kuypers, both reading her work and singing with three sets of musicians.

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The definition of oeuvre (the works of a writer, painter, or the like, taken as a whole) is from the Websters Unabridged 2001 Dictionary.



(THE WORKS OF A WRITER
TAKEN AS A WHOLE)

Janet Kuypers

JANET JK KUYPERS

SCARS PUBLICATIONS AND DESIGN

WITH PENNY DREADFUL PRESS

CONTENTS

about the author
 about the book
 Radio Interview 9/11/03
 Magazine Interview 12/9/03
 Forward *by Joe Speer*
 Introduction *by Cheryl Townsend*

THE ANCIENT

WRITTEN 1979-1989
 Under the Sea
 An Innocent Glance
 When I am Weak
 Listen To What You're Not Hearing
 No Longer Pity You
 My blood
 Leather Jacket
 I Look at the Letters Again
 Masquerade
 the Joshua Tree
 Signs of the Times

HOPE CHEST IN THE ATTIC

PUBLISHED 1993
additional comments
 Tall Man
 I Wanted Pain
 the Burning
 High Roller
 Moonlight
 Writing Your Name
 There I Sit
from Right There, By Your Heart
 Farmer
 Wedding Lost
 Coquinas
 All Men Have Secrets
from In The Air
 Medication

VI	THE WINDOW	
VII	PUBLISHED 1994	33
VIII	A Child in the Park	34
XII	A Stand-off	37
XIV	Childhood Memories <i>one</i>	38
XV	Childhood Memories <i>four</i>	39
	Childhood Memories <i>six</i>	40
	Christmas Eve	41
	Conversations, A Day of Grieving 2	42
3	Conversations, A Day of Grieving 3	43
4	Conversations, A Day of Grieving 4	44
5	Death	45
5	He Told Me His Dreams 1	46
6	He Told Me His Dreams 4	47
7	He Told Me His Dreams 9	48
7	My Father, Shooting an Animal	49
8	Poam:	
9	A Conversation With Jimbo Breen	50
10	Private Lives, the Elevated Train, Chicago 1	51
10	Private Lives, the Elevated Train, Chicago 2	52
11	Private Lives, the Elevated Train, Chicago 4	53
	Twin	54
	Rape Education 3	55
	Rape Education 1	56
13	Transcribing Dreams 3	58
14	The Martyr and the Saint	60
16	White Knuckled	61
16	Walking Home From School	62
17		
18	THE DOGGEREL	
18	WRITTEN 1992-1996	65
19	This You Don't Hate.	66
19	Because This Is What We Do	67
20		
22		
24	SULPHUR & SAWDUST	
25	PUBLISHED 1995	69
28	People's Rights Misunderstood	70
28	The State of the Nation	72
28	Everything was Alive and Dying	74

CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

PUBLISHED 1996

Introduction (Fred Whitehead)

additional comments

Packing

Hancock Suicide, Chicago,

December 1994

Helping Men in Public Places

Squid

Precinct Fourteen

Domestic Violence in America, Nashville,

Tennessee (nose)

Too Far

The Carpet Factory, the Shoes

SLATE & MARROW

PUBLISHED 1996

On an Airplane with a Frequent Flyer

Headache

My MotherMy MotherMy Mother

(WOMAN.)

PUBLISHED 1997

Introduction (Fred Whitehead)

Forward (Cheryl Townsend)

a Note from the Author

a Book for Men

BLISTER & BURN

PUBLISHED 1997

Anyone Good Enough

Burn Through Me

Before I Learned Better

A Woman Talking

About Her Rapist Friend

Content With Inferior Men

The Things Warren Says

Infallible

Chances Two: Here I Am

I'm Thinking

About Myself Too Much

Why I'll Never Get Married

Who You Tell Your Dreams To

Can't Answer That One

Russians At A Garage Sale

81

82

84

85

86

88

89

90

91

92

93

95

96

97

98

101

102

103

104

106

125

126

126

127

128

130

131

131

132

133

134

134

135

135

THE TRANSLATIONS

COMPLETED 1997-2003

Wrong Attention (Tamil)

You Will (Marathi)

Fire Alarms (Sign Language)

A Match (French)

Love Has Tendrils (French)

I Must Believe (Braille)

I Have My Dreams (Braille)

Mask (Serbian)

The Deep End (Italian)

They Called It Trust (German)

More Whiskey Sours (Hungarian)

Here Is Me (Korean)

Have To Ask (Bengali)

In The Room (Gujarti)

Choices (Heiroglyphics)

Ten Minutes (Dutch)

One The Flip Side (Welsh)

Self-Destructive (Indonesian)

Rhode Island is Neither a Road Nor an
Island (Danish)

Say It In The First Place (Swedish)

Motorcycle (Spanish)

Want That Too You Know (Teluga)

Maybe That It Enough (Gurmukhi)

Rain (Finnish)

I Am Always The One (Hungarian)

So Many Lies (Sanskrit)

I Want More Than That (Kannada)

The Third or Fourth Fourth of September

(Czech)

What Do You Do (Papiamento)

Now I'm Strong (Filipino)

A Diamond (Persian)

Creatures Can Life In Words (Hindi)

Who Is At My Side (Russian)

Civil War (Norwegian)

And Flowers And Funerals (Croatian)

Down The Drain (Chinese)

See You Crawl (Japanese)

Lambs to Heaven's Gate (Portuguese)

136

136

136

138

139

139

140

140

140

141

141

141

142

142

142

142

142

143

144

144

144

145

145

146

146

147

147

148

148

149

149

149

150

150

150

151

151

152

152

153

CONTENTS

UNDER PRESSURE

PUBLISHED 1997	155
Introduction (Jason Pettus)	156
Interview with Nation Magazine	158
Scars 1997	169
Kurt Irons (It's Just A Girl)	170
All These Reminders	171
And I'm Wondering	172
Japanese Television	173
The Measuring Scale	174
More Than We Should Have	175
Communication	176
Two Minutes With Ayn Rand	182
New to Chicago	184
Last Before Extinction	185

THE RECOVERY

WRITTEN 1998	187
Making Sense out of the Insane	188
Pressure On Me Again	189
Feel So Much	190
Supposed to be Done	190
Any Help At All	191
My Life Changing	191
Mean To Me	192
Don't Need The Crutches	192
Seasons 1998	193
The Hunter and The Fox	194
Changing Garments	194
Like My Motto	195
A Beacon Alone	196
Know How The Truth Is	197

RINSE & REPEAT

PUBLISHED 1999	199
Against My Will	200
I Don't Want To	202
How Do I Explain It	203

CHANGING GEARS

PUBLISHED 1999	209
<i>from</i> One Summer	210
The Bridge To New Orleans	211

SURVIVE & THRIVE

PUBLISHED 2000	213
Morning Will Be Kind	214
After The Wreckage	215
Holding My Skin Together	216
Gears Get Caught In The Mud	217

(NOT SO) **WARM & FUZZY**

PUBLISHED 2000	219
What it Felt Like	220
Whether or Not it is From Religion	221
Praying To Idols	224
The Battle At Hand	226

THE AVERAGE GUY'S GUIDE (TO FEMINISM)

PUBLISHED 2000	229
Men at the Construction Site	230
A Socially Accepted Target	231

TORTURE & TRIUMPH

PUBLISHED 2001	233
Andrew Hettinger	234
God Eyes	237
Being God	240

OH.

PUBLISHED 2002	243
Civil War	244
Fire Alarms	244
On the California Streets	244
Never Did the Same	245
I Have My Dreams	245
Ways to Spend your Money	245

THE ELEMENTS

PUBLISHED 2002 247
works in matchbook-styled additions

matchbook "General Insanity," Helena Wolfe
 Each Morning 248
 How I Imagine You 249

matchbook "{the apocalypse}", Janet Kuypers
 'Til the Fear in Me Subsides 250
 Death is a Dog 252
 Fantastic Car Crash 253

SIDE A/SIDE B

PUBLISHED 2003 255
 Burn It In 256
 Children, Churches and Daddies 259

THE NEW

WRITTEN 1998-2003 261
 Venture to the Unknown 262
 Freedom Just Past The Fence 263
 Military Police 264
 Changing City 265
 Start All Over 265
 Getting Quite Good At It 266
 What Women Want 267

ETC.

PUBLISHED 2004 269
 I'm Not Sick, But I'm Not Well 270
 Carpet 272
 Holding My Hand 273
 Once Wanted You As My Friend 274
 Timing Is Everything 276
 Scars 2000 277
 Grab The Others' Neck 280
 Weren't Even Married 282
 Burning Building 284
 Death Takes Many Forms. 285
 I Dreamt About You Last Night 288

I'm A Record Now 290
 Expecting The Stoning 291
 Isn't It Amazing 294
 All Your Fault 295
 People's Lives Were At Stake 296
 Lost In The Breeze 298
 Joy 299
 Fighting I Can Do 299
 Learning More 300
 My Dead Daughter 302
 True Happiness in the New Millennium 303
 Looking For A Worthy Adversary 306

BIBLIOGRAPHY 310

COLOPHON 323

WHERE PUBLISHED

Chapbooks published 324
 Books/Compact Discs published 325

IMAGE CREDITS

Ten out of thirty-three of the images in the "A Book For Men" supplement from (woman.) are not by Kuypers. The cover image in the book "Oh." is by Cheryl Townsend. Remaining images in this volume are from the author.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Janet Kuypers (June 22, 1970), graduated from the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana with a degree in News/Editorial Communications Journalism (with computer science engineering studies). She had the equivalent of a minor in photography and specialized in creative writing.

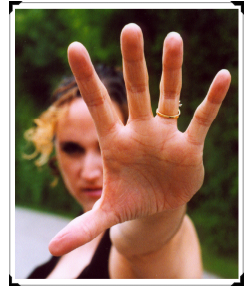


In the early 1990s she worked as a portrait photographer for years, was an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and edited two literary magazines. Later she was an art director, webmaster and photographer for a few magazines for a publishing company in Chicago.

Kuypers is published in books, magazines and on the internet almost 6,000 times for writing or almost 1,900 times for art work in her professional career; she has been profiled in such magazines as Nation and Discover U and was also interviewed on ArtustFirst.com Internet Radio. She has performed spoken word and music across the country - in the spring of 1998 she embarked on her first national tour, with featured performances, among other venues, at the Albuquerque Spoken Word Festival during the National Poetry Slam. She turned her writing into performance art on her own and with musical groups like "Pointless Orchestra," "5D/5D" and "Order From Chaos." She sang with acoustic bands "Mom's Favorite Vase", "Weeds and Flowers" and "the Second Axing," does music sampling and learned to play the guitar - her bands have had concerts in Chicago and in Alaska; in 2003 she hosted and performed at a weekly poetry and music open mic, and starting in 2002 was a featured performance artist, doing quarterly performance art shows with readings, music and images,

She has published eight books: *Hope Chest in the Attic*, *The Window. Close Cover Before Striking (woman.)*, *Autumn Reason*, *the Average Guy's Guide (to Feminism)*, *Contents Under Pressure*, and eventually *Changing Gears, Etc.* and *The Key To Believing*.

When doing all of that wasn't enough, she decided to quit her job and travel around the United States and Mexico, writing travel journals (*Changing Gear*) and writing her first novel (*The Key To Believing*). After a collection book of short stories was published of Janet Kuypers and Bernadette Miller's writing (called *Domestic Blisters*), she did intricate web design and engineering, using video (mov and mpeg), sound clips (.aif, .au, .mp3, .ra, and .wav), writings and e-books (PDF, Microsoft Reader, Palm Pilot reader, web page and text files) available on line.



ABOUT THIS BOOK

This is currently the most complete archive of published and unpublished poetry by Janet Kuypers.

This book has select pieces from past published books of poetry, including *Hope Chest in the Attic*, *Close Cover Before Striking*, and *Contents Under Pressure*. Portions of the books *The Window*, *The Average Guy's Guide to Feminism*, *Changing Gears, Etc.*, and (*woman.*) (which were limited editions), are also included in this volume. Also in this collection are listings from poems published in Scars Publications collection books *Sulphur & Sawdust*, *Slate & Marrow*, *Blister & Burn*, *Rinse & Repeat*, *Survive & Thrive*, *Torture & Triumph*, *Oh.*, *The Elements*, and *Side A/Side B*.



This volume also contains unpublished work (and writing previously only published under pen names), from her first poem written in 1979, through the release of this book.

The Table of Contents lists works from these books in their own sections, for an idea of when the pieces were written and when they were originally in print. Comments on these writings are also sprinkled throughout each section of the book.

This edition does not contain images (except for cover images, the “A Book of Men” section of (*woman.*) or the “passion” image with the poem “I’m Thinking About Myself Too Much”) or prose; prose exists in the book *Exaro Versus*; art exists in the book *l’arte*.



There is one section of translations in this volume; this section was generated after Bart Hellemans translated some of Kuypers’ writing into Finnish and released a chapbook where proceeds benefit Diabetes research, and *Discover U* published a few writings of Kuypers’ translations.

Previously unpublished writing in this volume are in different chronological sections:

The ancient. Older writings (1980 to 1989), including her first poem, “Under The Sea,” written when she was nine years old.

The Doggerel. This includes select pieces from the mid 1990s (1992 - 1996).

The Recovery. After a debilitating accident in 1998, Kuypers wrote in quantity; the writing here is confessional, analytical and news-oriented, as this was the only way she could actually write about going through this trauma. We have included about one eighth of the pieces from this period.

The New. These poems are from 1998 to present.

RADIO INTERVIEW

[HTTP://WWW.ARTISTFIRST.COM](http://www.ArtistFirst.com) 9/11/03

Radio: *Welcome to all of our listeners out there tonight. We're talking to Janet Kuypers, the author of many different poetry books, and the new novel **The Key To Believing** about AIDS and a government conspiracy. If you could tell us even more than what I've told all of our listeners about all of the different literary experiences that you do and create, that would be wonderful.*

JK: I've written poetry for probably over twenty years and I've probably got four or five books of poetry published, starting in 1993. I run a web site for Scars Publications, and they've got everything from information about their magazines, as well as downloadable chapbooks (PDF files), there's a news and philosophy text archive, we've got sound files in our audio and video section; there's some really cool stuff there. Primarily what I'm doing a lot of now is performance art, setting up shows, not only with poetry, but with journals and short stories as well, and setting them up with images in a display with music in the background (because I'm a photographer and do some music in my spare time).

Radio: *Janet is going to tell us a bit more about writing some of her pieces about death.*

JK: It was such a traumatic thing for me to go through as an innocent bystander (*going through having ones close to you die*), and not being able to do anything and seeing all this destruction; I didn't know how else to be able to get out my feelings, and get them across without sounding obnoxious, which is why I write what I write, which may explain why most of my work is about this - because I don't think it is a subject most people usually want to think about.

JK: The first book was published in 1993, it is called **Hope Cheat In The Attic**, because it is the idea of all those things you want to store up, it is a collection of thirteen years of poetry and prose and art. The second one is called **The Window**, and that one has a lot of writings that are parts of series of writings. Some are stories, and are parts of a series of what people tell you, and this was the window I was looking through. The third book I did probably has the best title of them all; it's called **Close Cover Before Striking**.

Radio: *I like that one too...*

JK: The byline says, "the book of poetry, prose, political essays, artwork and philosophical rants ... so I get to delve into having more essays and philosophy in my work, instead of just having lists of poetry. I did a very short novel in letter form, called

Autumn Reason, and I also did a spiral-bound book all about the clash between the sexes, because long ago I did work as an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and got to hear people's stories about dealing with rape - stories about what people have heard or about what has happened to them, so I have this book called (**Woman.**), which has a bunch of pieces, some never published, a lot of short stories. The last, or most recent, wide-spread book of poetry is called **Contents Under Pressure**. And that one also has quite a few short stories, and a lot of political pieces and essays in it, probably more than in any other book. I've done a few small printing runs of books, another woman's book called **The Average Guy's Guide (To Feminism)**, and I also did one after traveling around the United States by car with a friend called **Changing Gears**, and it was a bunch of journal entries and stories about going from state to state and what we saw, and what bizarre experiences we'd go through in meeting new people and finding a place to stay. Those were most of them, except the big, huge novel, the six hundred-fifty page opus called **The Key To Believing**. It's a private printing, which we have done right now for it, I'm working with agents right now to get it trimmed down for dealing with a publisher. But that book is about medical researchers that are looking for a cure and medicines for AIDS patients, and one of them stumbles upon information that leads them to believe that there is a government conspiracy about AIDS' origin. And that the government may also possess the cure for AIDS. It always started off with a more intelligent bent on learning more about the virus, but it then also becomes much more action-packed, about trying to figure out how to save lives, save their *own* lives when they got this information from agents.

Radio: *In your work with literary magazines, does that flow into your performance art?*

JK: Sometimes it does, yes. I've found that people recognize me as an editor and think that I could do performance art. That was how this started for me in recent years. At my first show, they wanted me to do something of poetry, and so I thought, 'okay, I have to make this more interesting,' so I interspersed short stories and journal entries into there, and I *talked* to people about ideas, and that would flow into something that could become a poem. So I set up this forty-five minute long show with a bunch of images, because I'm a photographer, so I'd have images that would go with what I was saying. And then I would have music in the background as well, so I would be a sitting person with a computer setup and I would have this whole show. And I think after that show they said, "okay, you're going to be a regular now" so I do quarterly performance art shows. Because people recognize me as being the editor of a literary magazine, they want to make me the highlight, or most important performance artist of the evening. So yeah, being an editor, people recognize you and they want you included in their projects, and they think, "Oh, you should do this," which is very helpful, because if I'm not running around to be in the middle of shows doing everything in Chicago, people will recognize me because I do things other than just sitting at open mikes and reading my work every week somewhere.

Radio: *In the book that you sent me, **Hope Chest in the Attic** at the beginning of*

this you did say that some of the items mixed fiction and...

JK: Oh yeah, that's what I'd usually say about most everything I've written, I mean, usually if you're going to write something down, even if it comes from something that you've understood or experienced or lived through, your own interpretation of it, versus how other would see it, might seem fictitious. Everyone puts their own spin or interpretation on things, and the words you choose to use are a way to get an emotion across to the reader. So I would say that even when there are elements of truth in something written of mine, there will also always be something to make the writing stronger, which might be a bit of fiction.

Radio: *How many poems have you written over the years?*

JK: Oh my gosh... Over a thousand, probably over eleven hundred, I'd have to guess, I don't know for sure. A lot. I've done short stories, probably toward fifty. Very few articles, I've written essays, ten to twenty of those, but I've also done a lot of artwork, because I was a portrait photographer for years back in the early 90s, and I love the camera, because that is a beautiful way to be able to capture things, and working on the computer as well, because you can be able to morph and create new images with editing work, so I've probably had artwork published about nineteen hundred times, on line or in magazines or books.

Radio: *That's incredible. I'd like to tell our audiences that the artwork on the covers of Janet Kuypers' book, and inside, like in the beginning of chapters and all, she has created herself.*

JK: The only one I can't say I took the photographs for was for the cover of **The Key To Believing**, I used stock photography of a gun and an AIDS ribbon and a key, but I just manipulated them to make them work for the cover. But yes, I'm usually taking my own pictures and creating on my own. Sometimes you don't know exactly what you're looking for when you're looking for an image for publication, and that's then when I think, 'oh, why I don't do it myself,' to get the image I was looking for.

Radio: *Would you like to tell everyone how your writing process usually goes?*

JK: When I write, I do so because I need to get it out of my system, so I try to think of a way to out it to words, because if I can do that, it will help me to process bad experiences and events that I have seen or gone through in, my life, and it can also therefore become therapeutic.

Radio: *Is that why you frequently write about women's issues, and why you studied them in college?*

JK: I studied that in college, and ... and I think my family was really worried because they heard my stories and thought, 'oh my God, what *happened* to her?', and I would say, "No, that didn't happen to me," but that's irrelevant. They saw what they want and whether or not it happened no longer becomes the issue. But the thing was, I decided I wanted to get into this because I saw, if nothing else, the fact that women *were* treated differently from men - even ones that were hard working, and driven, and oftentimes better than half of the men out there - they still had to deal with this obsta-

cle of men looking down at our breasts instead of actually thinking about the brain in our head. So I decided to see what I could do to help women that are going through experiences like this that a lot of people might think are not a big deal, because you know, rape can be thought of as just sex, and they'll think of it as commonplace (well, rapes *are* commonplace). I learned that one in four women after going through college will be raped - not by a stranger all the time, but by an acquaintance - it could be a boyfriend, or somebody they had broken up with, or somebody they had gone on dates with, or a buddy that they knew and felt comfortable enough with to bring them back to their own dorm. The statistics further say that one in three women will be raped in their lifetimes; that's a scary statistic, because if you know enough women, like if you've got a family with three women in it, two sisters and a mother, you know, if nothing has happened to them, they might have dealt with this same kind of pressure somehow, even if they haven't gone through a rape.

And I would see these things, and because people knew I was an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and I did shows about things like pornography against women (and that kind of thing), people would come up to me and tell me about how they'd been raped. Now, there's nothing wrong with people telling me these stories at all, but at the same time it starts to wear at *you* a little, because there's nothing you can do to stop these things, and all you can do is *hear* all of these bad stories over and over again. So trying to get that out of our system, it often helps to write them down.

I have a rape education series of poems in the second book, **The Window**. Once, for example, when we were in a meeting, a woman started raising her hand and asking questions about what the University could do to help press charges or punish a rapist, and the person running the meeting asked if this had happened to her, and the woman responded that yes it did. So the woman running the meeting asked, 'Forgive me if this is rude of me, but when did this happen to you?' and by the professional look and tone in the voice of the woman asking the questions you'd think it happened a few years ago, and she responded that it happened six days ago. And I was stunned, because she was so composed. When I heard that, all I could think was that some day it would hit her, it doesn't look like she's had time to react to it now, but someday all of these emotions of what has happened to her will hit her.

So yeah, my writing would be about things like that, and no, I'm not the woman that went up in a meeting and asked what could be done to help prosecute a rapist, I'm not the woman that said I was raped six days ago, but this is what you write about. So yeah, a lot of women's issues will come out, because you write about what you see around you, and I put myself into the element to hear all of these things.

Radio: *I'd like to remind everyone that you're listening to the ArtistFirst Network, and this is the Authors First Show, I am Jade Logan, your host, and I'm interviewing Janet Kuypers, who has written many different poems, essays, a novel or two, and does lots of performance work in the Chicagoland area.*

MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

DISCOVER U, VOLUME 2 ISSUE 7, 12/9/03

Discover U: How long have you written poetry?

Kuypers: I wrote my first poem in 1979, so it has been almost 25 years since I first wrote a poem. Ten years later, by about 1989, I found issues that I wanted to talk about and share with others - I think that is when I found my voice, nearly 1990. That is also when I started writing short stories and prose. I read a prose poem that made me realize that there were other avenues for expressing ideas. Only in the past 5 to 10 years have I learned that performance art as a vehicle for broadcasting writing is a valuable tool for expression, because then you can utilize audio (with your vocals and with sounds effects) as well as video (artwork to coincide with and emphasize the writing).

Discover U: Which poets have inspired you the most?

Kuypers: No one. I know that sounds strange, but I don't read other people's writings and then idolize them for it. Usually when I write, I write off of my own ideas. I may read one thing by one author (like the prose poem "The Colonel" by Carolyn Forché, or Ai's poem "The Good Shepherd: Atlanta, 1981", or any of the writings of Ayn Rand, which are not poetry), and it will drive me to think of things in a certain way and therefore write about things in a certain way. As an editor I read other people's writings regularly, and something may come up that drives me to write something, but otherwise no poets have "inspired" me.

Discover U: You've traveled to Europe. Can you tell me about Europe?

Kuypers: When you visit, try to soak in as much as you can. The sights (natural and man-made), sounds (listening to others speak a different language can be fascinating), and feelings (the ambience of places are different even across the United States; learning different cultures and behaviors are memories you can keep with you) you experience in countries in Europe are different from what you're used to. So take pictures, but remember how people viewed their land, so you can keep more than snapshots from your travels.

Learn the culture of where you are visiting. Do your best to fit in when you're also witnessing things you can't see in the United States. This is also more helpful when needing to ask for assistance in a foreign country. You at least show that you're doing your best to fit in and otherwise not be in anyone's way.

People are more relaxed there. Meals are different. Stores are not always open and will close for a break during the day. People don't have cars everywhere like we do in America (European governments don't give gas and oil price breaks the way the U.S. government does, so you'll see tons of scooters and bicycles for travel). People can even use the trains or airplanes to commute from one country to another weekly for

the jobs. Try to learn and understand the way people there live when you visit, and adjust yourself to this new way of living when in Europe.

Discover U: You are currently compiling a collection of poetry. Can you tell me a little about these projects?

Kuypers: Six poetry books (“Hope Chest in the Attic,” “The Window,” “Close Cover Before Striking,” “(Woman.),” “Contents Under Pressure,” and “The Average Guy’s Guide (to Feminism)”), a novel in letter form (“Autumn Reason”), a journal book or travel through the United States (“Changing Gears”), and one epic novel (“The Key To Believing”) have been published containing parts of my writing. In 1998, I was in a near-fatal car accident, and after starting to recover I noticed that many of my writings have only been published under pen names, and there was no real organization to all of my writings. This was when the idea started (in 1998) to compile my writings into a collection book. “Oeuvre” collects the best writings from past published books (collection books was in as well as my own books), and also includes unpublished poetry (including that first poem ever written in 1979) from 1979 to 2004.

Discover U: Tell me about your web site.

Kuypers: I have my own web site (<http://www.janetkuypers.com>), and it is a center for getting any information about my work. There is a complete archive of my writing (individual pages, as well as links to published books and chapbooks), and there is a listing of past music with the acoustic bands (*Mom’s Favorite Vase*, *Weeds and Flowers*, and *The Second Axing*) I have been in since 1993 (radio interviews, mp3 files, live concert tracks at shows in Alaska, recordings from the weekly open mic I ran for poetry and music, and video, and clips some from live shows). There is a full listing of art and photography, and there are performance art show links I have done (first recorded show, 1997; more recent shows also have links to photography used, CD versions of the shows, some video, and mp3 files). There are a few personal link pages too - so there’s a lot of information there to read from.

Discover U: You are a writer, photographer, artist, traveler, editor, wife, woman, friend. How do you do it all? What do you do to relax?

Kuypers: I don’t know HOW; I just do it. And no, I don’t relax. I don’t think I know how. I think my brain is always processing and wants to work. If there is something I could be doing, I might as well just start doing it. I’ve never been a procrastinator, and when there is something I see I want to accomplish, well, I work until I get the job done. So when I get a lot of ideas, I start on a lot of projects. I think I always see my life as having a goal line that I can see in the distance, so I keep pushing myself toward getting to that goal line. Because I do many things, I can get to a goal line for one project, but there is always something new that I keep striving for.

It allows me to keep pushing myself, and keep moving forward. I think striving for something keeps me strong, and keeps me alive.

Discover U: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Kuypers: I think I just want to be someone that makes people think.

INTRODUCTION

BY JOE SPEER

EDITOR, THE BEATLICK NEWS

I always enjoy the multitudinous manifestations of Janet Kuypers' oeuvre. I asked her one day if she had any video of herself I could use on my Speer Presents TV show. I figured she might have some footage of herself behind a mic at a Chicago poetry reading. In short-order she mailed me a VHS that set me back on my heels. It was like she collaborated with Jean-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut. The segments were highly creative and she had dashed them off special for me. I realized then that she can do anything she sets her mind on. And she produces with a rapid-fire style which accounts for her prolificacy. But her snappy productivity does not impair her aim. She reminds me of Atticus Finch in Harper Lee's novel "To Kill A Mockingbird". Atticus is a dead shot with a rifle. If he shoots fifteen times and misses once he figures he wasted ammunition. When Kuypers draws a bead on a subject she keeps it in her cross hairs until she is ready to pull the trigger. She is a marksman with words. And she is undaunted. If she is hurt on the way she feels decorated by the scars. She will tackle a worthy opponent or belch out loud with no regrets. She gives meaning to life by documenting the nuances of relationships, the ones that worked and the ones that went askew. She has such empathy with others that someone can tell her a story and she will absorb that experience. She can assume the point of view of a farmer losing connection with the land, a rape survivor, an accident victim, a prescription drug user, or an Army repairman watching Cubans behind a razor wire fence. This volume is a celebration of a body of work, starting with her first poem "Under the Sea" and moving to recent poems that set the watermark for this point in her development. It is like watching a storm of creativity develop from a gentle dust devil to a full-blown tornado. Take time with this book. It contains over two decades of artistic ferment. The world is a better place because Kuypers uses her gifts to create. If, for example, she had taken up the thompson machine gun, instead of the camera, the computer, publishing, and design, many of us would be dead. Kuypers is divinely inspired and I am one of the cherubim singing her praises.

FORWARD

BY CHERYL TOWNSEND
EDITOR, IMPETUS MAGAZINE

Janet Kuypers is a tenacious, steadfast perpetuator of the written word. She conquers poetry, photography, performance art, singing, collage work, publishing, and more. She's a renaissance woman to the nth degree. Herein we get minute selections of her previously published and first viewed poems, varied writings and artwork. Kuypers is topical while she runs the gamut of emotions; pain, loss, relationships in good, bad or indifferent motifs. She offers up honest slices of life in poems as in "A Child In The Park", opening some of her own wounds in sake of her readership. I was pleased with the inclusion of work from **Sulphur and Sawdust**, which I feel to be her most powerful collection. Dealing with the battles of AIDS, rape, and politics in general, she prevails a mighty sword against injustice and the agony of having those scales tipped against you.

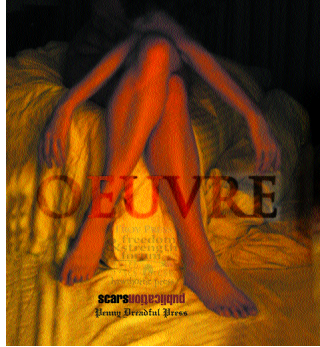
Kuypers is adept at placing herself in the emotions of others, as in **Close Cover Before Striking's** "Hancock Suicide, Chicago" where she is "witness" to a horrible death and tries to deal with its impact.

The **Blister and Burn** collective would almost have to be called the book of relations, with "Can't Answer That One" being almost the lament of women in majority.

For the multi-bilingual, you can enjoy the writings in UNRELEASED WRITINGS: THE TRANSLATIONS.. which I can't comment on because I couldn't read any of them..alas.

Rinse and Repeat is stoked with anger and emotion while **Survive and Thrive** departs with a warm, erotic interlude with "Morning Be Kind".

There are also interviews with various magazines, radio shows and such. The best, most revealing one being that with Nation Magazine.



Janet Kuypers
JANET KUYPERS
SCARS PUBLICATIONS AND DESIGN
WITH PENNY DREADFUL PRESS

THE REMAINS
the Ancient

unreleased
unreleased
writings

{the ancient}

1979-1994

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!

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

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 I usually 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

LISTEN TO WHAT YOU'RE NOT HEARING

I feign a smile
as the breeze comes
bouncing off the building
sweeping around
the backs of my legs

When the breeze
took my hair
it licked your face

You were annoyed

I wasn't surprised

You asked me
what was wrong

I said, "nothing"

And you believed me

I'm not trying to
make any moves
anymore

because I'm afraid
I'll make the
wrong move

I don't mean to
annoy you

Listen to
what you're not
hearing

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

MY BLOOD

Take my blood
it is yours
Take the blood
that runs cold
through my body
and fill my veins
with the tears
I have too often
cried for you

LEATHER JACKET

FADED AWAY IN THE MORNING FOG

at five-thirty in the morning
I sat in the kitchen
straining to swallow the tears
and you raced
to get your luggage into your truck

my mind wandered
to the candles
the roses
the pizza
and all I could think
was that the best chapter
of my meager life
was coming to a pathetic end

I looked at you
in your leather jacket
and you took my hand
and led me to dance

I really didn't mean to
but I couldn't help but cry
for the idea of our last dance
destroyed me
as you drove away

I dreamt that you came back
and said you wouldn't leave
but as the car lights
faded away in the morning fog
and you tuned the corner
I fell to the floor
screaming and crying
I had no one to blame but circumstance
and I couldn't fathom going on

I LOOK AT THE LETTERS AGAIN

“This isn’t supposed to happen,”
I said under my breath
as I threw the letters aside.
Thoughts quickly rushed through my mind
as quickly as the nights passed
in the Arizona heat.
Why do I even save these letters?
Why do I keep reading them over and over again?
Why do I hold them to my mouth,
hoping that you may slip out between the words,
touch my face, kiss my lips

I picked up the letters again

I remember when you asked me
about my political and religious beliefs
You asked me about my past
and my dreams for the future
It seemed as if you wanted to know
every little detail about me,
so that you could only love me more
I was happy to tell you

I look at the letters again
I hold them once more to my lips -
but this time,
not in the hope that you may touch me,
but in the hope that I may be able to touch you
I kiss the letters
I can’t put them down.

MASQUERADE

you asked me to the masquerade
and I willingly complied
but I'm tired of wearing that dress
for the feathers in my costume
won't stop licking my eyes
and you cannot see the tears
falling behind my cheek -

when you see the price they pay
I'm sure you'd come and join
the masquerade, you say
but the price is too high
for I don't want to wear a mask
with you, and I would only hope
that I don't have to

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

"Masquerade" first appeared in the book Contents Under Pressure.

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