

Challenge of Night and Day,  
and Chicago Poems

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cc&d 1555-1555 chapbook  
Scars Publications 2010



## Electric in the Sun

I'm electric in the spring sun  
nomad in the summer dust  
my lantern burns  
without fuel,  
I lie in the deep grass  
with microphones tossed  
over my ears  
and feel like I'm on a high  
psychedelic  
blue-green grass  
pink sunglasses in my left hand,  
teeth pearly white ivory tusks,  
muscle tee shirt, with brown sash  
from shoulder to hip,  
crazy beads around my neck  
yellow-orange shaped like  
candy corn  
life is but a blitz,  
I'm electric in the sun,  
and there is no cell phone  
by my side.

## Indolent Sun

In early March  
an indolent sun  
persists in tossing  
volunteer rays of  
soft flickering sun silk  
through dark desolate  
willow tree branches  
melting remnants  
of snow diamond crystals  
from weathered wooden planks  
on my balcony.  
I'm starting to think life  
is an adjective exaggerated  
by the sway of seasons.  
It's normal feeding time.  
Below two floors  
wild Canadian geese  
wait impatiently  
for the tossing of morning feed;  
the silent sound they hear\_  
no dropping of the seed.

## Hookers on Archer Avenue

Late evening, early morning,  
I search the night for whores,  
young and bloody with desires.  
The night streets are silent streets  
except for the hookers and the Johns.  
One wants the pushing of groins  
the other green eyes in dollar bills  
are sacred treasures  
the snatch of the wallet, a consecrated craft.  
Both hit the streets quickly  
satisfy the needs quickly  
finish in different directions quickly.  
I'm an old buck now rich with memories  
more than movement, talking the trash,  
taking the porn pictures,  
peeking Tom expert with a naked eye,  
snooping around department store  
corners, and dumpy old alleyways.  
My hair is gray, my teeth eroding,  
my thoughts leaning toward prayer  
A.M. Catholic mass,  
finishing off the early morning  
with a lethargic walk  
to pick up my social security check  
comforts my needs.

## Charley Plays a Tune (Version 4)

Crippled, in Chicago,  
with arthritis  
and Alzheimer's,  
in a dark rented room,  
Charley plays  
melancholic melodies  
on a dust-filled  
harmonica he  
found abandoned  
on a playground of sand  
years ago by a handful of children  
playing on monkey bars.  
He hears bedlam when he buys fish at the local market  
and the skeleton bones of the fish show through.  
He lies on his back, riddled with pain,  
pine cones fill his pillows and mattress;  
praying to Jesus and rubbing his rosary beads  
Charley blows tunes out his  
celestial instrument  
notes float through the open window  
touch the nose of summer clouds.  
Charley overtakes himself with grief  
and is ecstatically alone.  
Charley plays a solo tune.

*This poem also appears  
in the January 2009 issue  
of ccc&d magazine (v192)*

# Harvest Time

## Version 6

A Métis Indian lady, drunk --  
hands blanketed as in prayer,  
over a large brown fruit basket  
naked of fruit, no vine, no vineyard  
inside -- approaches the Edmonton,  
Alberta adoption agency.  
There are only spirit gods  
inside her empty purse.

Inside the basket, an infant,  
restrained from life,  
with a fruity winesap apple  
wedged like a teaspoon  
of autumn sun  
inside its mouth.  
A shallow pool of tears  
mounts in native blue eyes.  
Snuffling, the mother offers  
a slim smile, turns away.  
She slithers voyeuristically  
through near slum streets  
and alleyways,  
looking for drinking buddies  
to share a hefty pint  
of applejack wine.

## California Summer

Coastal warm breeze  
off Santa Monica, California  
the sun turns salt  
shaker upside down  
and it rains white smog, humid  
mist.  
No thunder, no lightening,  
nothing else to do  
except sashay  
forward into liquid  
and swim  
into eternal days  
like this.

*This poem also appears  
in the August 2010 issue  
of ccb&d magazine (v211)*

# Gingerbread Lady

(Version 3)

Gingerbread lady,  
no sugar or cinnamon spice;  
years ago arthritis and senility took their toll.  
Crippled mind moves in then out, like an old sexual adventure  
blurred in an imagination of fingertip thoughts.  
Who remembers the characters?  
There was George, her lover, near the bridge at the Chicago River:  
she missed his funeral; her friends were there.  
She always made feather-light of people dwelling on death,  
but black and white she remembers well.  
The past is the present; the present is forgotten.  
Who remembers Gingerbread Lady?  
Sometimes lazy-time tea with a twist of lime,  
sometimes drunken-time screwdriver twist with clarity.  
She walks in scandals.  
Her live-in maid smirked as Gingerbread Lady gummed her food,  
false teeth forgotten in a custom-imprinted cup  
with water, vinegar, and ginger.  
Years ago, arthritis and senility took their toll.  
Ginger forgot to rise out of bed;  
no sugar, or cinnamon toast.

# I Brew in Broth

When the silence of my  
life tickles in darkness  
delves into my daily routine  
caught in my melancholy music  
at times, not exact;  
then exuberant auto racing playing  
at times, not exact\_  
a new poem published or a kick in the ass\_  
kick smacks like tornado alley  
in the tomato can  
left over paste  
of my emotions  
at times, not exact;  
I realize the split of legacy,  
of loyalty on its knees fractured  
like a comma or sentence fragment,  
naked like a broken egg  
between friendship and hatred,  
I stew like beef broth  
simmering  
sort of liked, sort of hated,  
not exact.

## Nikki Purrs

Soft nursing  
5 solid minutes  
of purr  
paws paddling  
like a kayak competitor  
against ripples of my  
60 year old river rib cage-  
I feel like a nursing mother  
but I'm male and I have no nipples.  
Sometimes I feel afloat.  
Nikki is a little black skunk,  
kitten, suckles me for milk,  
or affection?  
But she is 8 years old a cat.  
I'm her substitute mother,  
afloat in a flower bed of love,  
and I give back affection  
freely unlike a money exchange.  
Done, I go to the kitchen, get out  
Fancy Feast, gourmet salmon, shrimp,  
a new work day begins.

## Rod-Stroke Survival, With a Deadly Hammer

Rebecca fantasized that life was a lottery ticket or a pull of a lever,  
that one of the bunch in her pocket was a winner or the slots were a redeemer;  
but life itself was not real that was strictly for the mentally insane at the Elgin  
Mental Institution.

She gambled her savings away on a riverboat  
stuck in mud on a riverbank, the Grand Victoria, in Elgin, Illinois.

Her bare feet were always propped up on wooden chair;  
a cigarette drooped from her lips like morning fog.

She always dreamed of traveling, not nightmares.

But she couldn't overcome, overcome,  
the terrorist ordeal of the German siege of Leningrad.

She was a foreigner now; she is a foreigner for good.

Her first husband died after spending a lifetime in prison  
with stinging nettles in his toes and feet; the second  
husband died of hunger when there were no more rats  
to feed on, after many fights in prison for the last remains.

What does a poet know of suffering?

Rebecca has rod stroked survival with a deadly mallet.

She gambles nickels, dimes, quarters, tokens tossed away,  
living a penniless life for grandchildren who hardly know her name.

Rebecca fantasized that life was a lottery ticket or the pull of a lever.

## Willow Tree Night and Snowy Visitors

(Version 3)

Winter tapping  
hollow willow tree trunk-  
a four month visitor about to move in  
unload his messy clothing  
be windy about it-  
bark is grayish white as coming night with snow  
fragments the seasons.  
The chill of frost lays a deceitful blanket  
over the courtyard greens and coats a  
ghostly white mist over yellowed willow  
leaves widely spaced teeth-  
you can hear them clicking  
like false teeth  
or chattering like chipmunks  
threatened in a distant burrow.  
The willow tree knows the old man  
approaching has showed up again,  
in early November with  
ice packed cheeks and brutal  
puffy wind whistling with a sting.

## Manic is the Dark Night

Deep into the forest  
the trees have turned  
black, and the sun  
has disappeared in  
the distance beneath  
the earth line, leaving  
the sky a palette of grays  
sheltering the pine trees  
with pitch-tar shadows.  
It is here in this black  
and sky gray the mind  
turns psycho  
tosses norms and pathos  
into a ground cellar of hell,  
tosses words out through the teeth.  
“Don’t smile or act funny,  
try to be cute with me;  
how can I help you today  
out of your depression?”  
I fell jubilant, I feel over the moon  
with euphoric gaiety.  
Damn I just feel happy!  
Back into the wood of somberness  
back into the twigs,  
sedated the psychiatrist  
Scribbles, notes, nonsense on a pad of yellow paper:  
“mania, oh yes, mania, I prescribe  
lithium, do I need to call the police?”  
No sir, back into the dark woods I go.  
Controlled, to get my meds.  
Twist and rearrange my smile,  
crooked, to fit the immediate need.  
Deep in my forest  
the trees have turned black again.  
To satisfy the conveyer.  
The Lord of the dark wood.

## Poem From My Grave

Don't bring the rosary beads  
it's too damn late for doing repetitions.  
Eucharist, I can handle the crackers and wine;  
I love the Lord just like you.  
Catholicism circles itself with rituals--  
ground hogs and squirrels dancing with rosary beads,  
naked in the sun and the night, eating the pearls  
and feeling comfortable about it.  
Rituals and rosary beads are indigestible  
even the butterflies go coughing in the farmer's cornfields..  
Cardinal George, Chicago, would choke on the damn things;  
some of his priest would have thought it a gay orgasm or piece  
remote found in scripture from Sodam & Gamora.  
But my bones in ginger dust lie near a farm in DeKalb, Illinois  
where sunset meshes corn with a yellow gold glow like rich teeth.  
My tent is with friends there we said prayers privately like silent  
moonlight. Farmers touch the face of God each morning after just  
one cup of Folgers coffee Columbian blend,  
or pancakes made with water and batter, sparse on the sugar.  
Sometimes I would urinate on the yellow edge of flowers,  
near the tent, late at night, before the hayride, speak  
to the earth and birds like gods.  
Never did I pull the rosary beads from my pocket.  
It's too late, damn it, for rosary beads and repetitions.



*This poem also appears in  
the August 2008 issue  
of cc&d magazine (v188)  
and the collection book  
**Hope and Creation***

*Photo from Arlington  
National Cemetery by  
Janet Kuypers 10/25/03*

# Illinois Farmers

(Version 3 09-09-09)

Illinois writer in the land of Lincoln  
new harvest without words  
plenty of sugar pie plum, peach cobbler pie,  
buried in grandma's sugar  
factory sweets and low flowing river nearby-  
transports of soy bean, corn, and cattle feed  
into the wide bass mouth of the Kishwaukee River.  
It's the moment of reunion,  
when friends and economy come together-  
hotdogs, marshmallows, tents scattered,  
playing kick ball with that black farm dog.

It's a simple act, a farmer gone blind with the night pink sky,  
desolate farmer, simple flat land, DeKalb, Illinois.

Betsy and Phil invite us all to the camp and fireside.

But Phil is still in the field, pushing sunset to dusk.  
He is raking dry the farm soil of salvation, moisture has its own religious quirks,  
dead seed from weed hurls up to the metal lips of the cultivator pitting.

The full moon is undressing, pink fluorescent hints of blue, pajamas, turned  
inward near midnight sky against the moon now fully naked and embarrassed.

Hayrides for strangers go down dark squared-off roads with lights hanging,  
children humming school tunes, long farmhouse lights lost in the near distance.

Humming till dawn, Christian songs repeated over God's earth.  
Dead go the sounds of the tractor, with the twist of a switch off,  
down to the dusk and off the road's edge.

It's the moment of reunion.

## Thoughtful

### If You Find No Poem

If you find  
no poem on  
your doorstep  
in the morning,  
no paper, no knock on your door,  
and your life is poorly edited  
but no broken dashes  
or injured meter  
and you don't wear white  
dresses late in life  
embroidered with violet  
flowers on the collar;  
nor do you have  
burials daily  
across main street,  
and no one whispers  
in your ear, Emily Dickinson-  
you feel alone-  
but not reclusive-  
the sand lady  
still sleeping in your eyes-  
wiping your tears away-  
if you find  
no poem on  
your doorstep-  
you know you're not  
from New England.

First updraft  
late September  
at the door

almost asleep  
remembering  
what I forgot at the store

my ex-girlfriend  
shows up  
on my doorstep  
with no place to stay  
my birthday.

### Raindrop Baby (Version 1)

I'm a Chicago raindrop baby  
silhouetted in the night,  
single-ringed single person  
minus the 24 carat gold.  
A harvester of night life,  
star crystal, seated, well  
proportioned,  
a gatherer of sluts  
in my imagination.

## Bird Feeder

Baby,  
born  
just  
a  
sparrow-  
first flight  
from balcony  
to tree limb.  
A chip of corn falls  
from the feeder  
to the ground.

## Fog Feathers

(V2)

I am old frustrated thought.  
I look into my once-eagle eyes  
and find them dim before my dead mother.  
I see through clouded egg whites with days  
passing by like fog feathers.  
I trip over old experiences and expressions,  
try hard to suppress them or revisit them;  
I'm a fool in my damned recollections,  
not knowing what to keep and what to toss out.  
But the dreams flow like white flour and deceive me  
till they capture the nightmare of the past —  
images wrapped up in a black blanket —  
and wake me in front of my psychiatrist.  
It is at times like these I know not where I walk  
or venture. I trip over my piety and spill my coffee cup.  
I seek sanctuary in the commonplace of my life.  
It is here the days pass and the years slip like ice cubes;  
solid footing is a struggle in the socks of depression.  
I am old frustrated thought,  
passing by like fog feathers.

## Rose Petals in a Dark Room

I walk in a mastery of the night and light  
my money changers walk behind me  
they are fools like clowns in a shadow of sin,  
they're busy as bees as drunken lovers,  
Sodom and Gomorrah before the salt pillar falls.

In a shadow of red rose pedals  
drunken lovers walk changing Greek and Roman  
currency to Jewish or Tyrian money-  
they are fools, all fools, at what they do.

Everyone's life is a conflict.

They are my lovers and my sinners  
I can't sleep at night without them  
by my bed or the sea of Galilee.  
Fish in cloth nets are my friends and my converts.  
I pray in my garden alone; while all the rest  
who love beside me sleep behind their innocence.  
The rose is a tender thorn compared to my arrest.  
and soon crucifixion.

It is here the morning and the night come together,  
where the sea and the land part;  
where the building crumbles  
and I trust not myself to them.

I am but a poet of the ministry,  
rose petals in a dark room fall.  
Everyone's life is a conflict.  
But mine is mastery of light and night  
and I walk behind the footsteps of no one.

# South Chicago Night and Day

## Short Version

Night is drifters,  
sugar rats, street walkers, pick-pockets, pimps,  
insects, Lake Michigan perch,  
neon signs blinking half the bulbs  
burned out.

In the warmth of morning sun, lips grinning,  
sidewalks folding open,  
the big city drifts, and sailboats  
lean against the Lake Michigan sand.

## Mother, Edith, at 98

Edith, in this nursing home  
blinded with macular degeneration,  
I come to you with your blurry  
eyes, crystal sharp mind,  
your countenance of grace-  
as yesterday's winds  
I have chosen to consume you  
and take you away.

“Oh, where did Jesus disappear  
to”, she murmured,  
over and over again,  
in a low voice  
dripping words  
like a leaking faucet:  
“Oh, there He is my  
Angel of the coming.”

# South Chicago Night

(Version 2)

Night,  
south Chicago is filled with drifters,  
sugar rats, street walkers, pick-pockets and pimps,  
a few whores on 95th street south  
fill out the night agenda with silent whispers;  
thousands of tiny fingers of greed snitch  
dip into pockets other than their own.  
The night air is full of insects and Lake Michigan perch smells.  
Ladies diligent in the night,  
High on the rise of condo balconies and drugs  
Paint a picture, gesture to strangers on the streets  
below, “do you want a date?”  
The neon signs are blinking and half the bulbs  
are burned out.  
Mayor daily or is it Daley, is tucked in sleeping blankets tonight  
in south Bridgeview; while most of the trouble lodges at the Salvation  
Army where Christ lives with sinners.  
Parents, despair. Surrender their children for  
bucks and old silver coins traded earlier at the pawn shop;  
some drink gut-rot sweet cherry wine and act as slave pushers-  
but the children continue to roam the streets in designer clothing.  
Before the warmth of morning sun, lips grin,  
sidewalks fold turn up and open to foot traffic,  
the city of Chicago trembles from the taste of delicious dew.  
Just a map image and picture-frame shadow  
of the city with the “big shoulders.”  
Mayor Daily or is it Daley is sleeping and ducked away sound tonight.  
The big city drifts, and in the morning light, sailboats  
lean against the side walls of Lake Michigan sand and shoreline.

## Chicago

I walk in a pillow of cinder  
flames apart from the night they ignited.  
I don't know where I live I lost my compass  
and my bearings for directions fell to the under street.  
The L trains still flow on tracks decrepit, decried  
I toss feelings toward the sea, no  
I toss feelings toward Lake Michigan,  
a loyalist at heart no memory to me  
I will be forgotten like lead to water;  
or lead to fish, or a forgotten park  
that the Mayor Daley thought significant.  
I lie in the shadow of the grass.  
To simplify all this  
I lie in the shadow of grass.  
I drop words to honey  
to cactus and let it stick  
in the history of Chicago and the old brick buildings.  
Apart from the boats and the docks  
and the harbors, let's not be fools,  
Al Capone ruled this town.

## Catch on the Fly

Full barrel up 53 north,  
heading to Lake Zurich, IL,  
Christian talk radio 1660  
on the radio dial,  
crisp winter day  
sunbeams dancing down  
on the pavement like midgets.  
85 mph in a 65 mph zone,  
just to aggravate the police,  
black Chevy S10 pick up,  
shows what a deviant I am  
in dark colors.

Running late for a client appointment,  
creating poems on a small hand held recorder  
knowing there is not payment for this madness  
in this little captured taped area of words.

Headlights down the highway for a legacy  
into the future, day dreaming like a fool obsessed.

Working out the layout of this poem or getting my ego in place,  
I will catch up with the imagery when I get back home.

This is my life, a poem in the middle of the highway.  
Scampering, no one catches me when I'm speeding  
like this.

*This poem also appears  
in the January 2008 issue  
of cc&d magazine (v180)*

## Forked in Itasca, IL.

I am so frustrated  
I want to chew  
the dandruff  
out of the internet hair implant  
and dislodge it,  
for a lost love affair I never cared  
about and hardly knew.  
Don't tell me about my sentence structure,  
I am human in these simple words.  
I swear to you I curse.  
Then the ram of my affair falls short  
frustrating my approach to the world  
at my fingertips.  
No Yellow Pages here my love.  
The dial up of my local connection  
is wretched, stuck unincorporated  
in the land I approved to live in,  
monopolized by Comcast the  
robbers of the poor and the humbled.  
All I hear is the rambling of the railroad tracks.  
I grow numb in my deafness faint with my hearing.  
Did I ask for your opinion?  
I am a frustrated foreign camper  
in my own community.  
Of a village I don't live in,  
but I love this local village I lie about.  
I am estranged.  
I tie knots in contradictions  
when I travel light and far,  
visit home I long for a journey  
past where I have never been.  
Is this the reason I am lost  
forked in between  
the poet I think I am  
and the working man  
my bills dictate?

# Bird Lady

(Version 2)

(Photo available on request)

They call her old maid Misty, as in fog, she misses the sun.  
She runs a small pet store, more for the injured and lame,  
alone and half the light bulbs have burnt out.  
In the backroom everything smells of dust and feathers.  
The cockatoo is cuddly and named Brenda, but has bad toiletry manners.  
The macaw is well hidden, and fetches a high price on the open market, called Ginger.  
Misty is surrounded by wired bird cages,  
jungle noises in unfamiliar places,  
and sleeps on a portable cot.  
When parrots or parakeets shout shrills in the night,  
her eyes squint and flash out in the dark but no one sees it.  
Squinting is a lonely habit.  
Misty works alone and is getting old.  
On a wall, near her cot, hangs a picture  
but is it Jesus, or St. Jude Thaddaeus  
carrying the image of Jesus in his hand or close to his chest,  
difficult to tell darkness dimmed at night.  
Misty sometimes sleepwalks at night from small room to the other  
she bumps, sometimes trips and falls, her warfarin guarantees bruises.  
Misty tosses conjectures: "I'm I odd, old school, or just crazy?"  
Her world is eye droppers, bird feeders, poop in cages, porcelain knickknacks.  
Love left Misty's life years ago, when World War II ended and so did her marriage.  
As she ages eve rything is measure in milliliters, everything seems short and small  
medications in small dosages day by day.  
Today is dim, raining outside, and old maid Misty still misses the sun.

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**scarspublications**

published in conjunction with  
**cc&d magazine**

*the unreligious, nonfamily-oriented literary and art magazine*  
ccandd96@scars.tv <http://scars.tv>  
ISSN 1068-5154 INTERNET ISSN #1555-1555

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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, v2 & v2), Finally, Literature for the Snotty and Elite (v1, v2 & part 1), a Wake-Up Call From Tradition, (recovery), Dark Matter: the Mind of Janet Kuypers, Evolution, (tweet),*

*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, Survival of the Fittest, Crawling Through the Dirt, Laying the Groundwork, Weathered, echo, Ink in my Blood, Bound (4 editions), 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 Málaga, Memento Mori, In the Palace of Creation, R.I.P., Bob the Bumble Bee, Remnants and Shadows, I Saw This, the Drive, Thomas at Tea, Crashing Down Nineteenth, Blue Collar Ballet, nopeom, In Your Heart, the Apostrophe's Teardrops of God, the Adventures of the Key to Believing Bear, Anais Nin: an Understanding of her Art (second printing), Deckard Kinder / Charlie Newman*

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*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), the DMJ Art Connection *Indian Flux, the 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), *PB&J* Two for the Price of One (EP), *Kiki, Jake and Haystack* An American Portrait, *Kuypers/the Bastard Trio/Paul Baker/the JoAnne Powters 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 HAI*man of South Africa Burn Through Me (2 CD set)