

The background features a vintage-style microphone with a silver grille and a dark handle. To the left, a bright lightning bolt strikes a dark silhouette of a human head in profile, facing right. The entire scene is set against a dark, textured background.

# Slinging the Word

Janet Kuypers  
poetry collected for the  
WordSlingers Radio show  
WLW Chicago Radio 88.7 FM

octd 2008 chapbook



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poetry read at WordSlingsers,  
the WLUW Chicago radio show (88.9 FM)  
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## Chicago, West Side

she knew who they were coming for

she crouched in front of the window  
straddling her chair she moved from the corner  
her coffee sat in the window sill  
the condensation rising, beading

on the window right about at her eye level.  
she took the side of her index finger  
periodically and smeared some of the  
water away to look into the streets.

the snow was no longer falling on the  
west side of Chicago; it just packed  
itself darker and deeper into the ground  
with every car that drove over it.

she gunshot was ringing in her ear  
still. it was so loud. the earth cried  
when she pulled that trigger. let out  
a loud, violent scream. she could still

hear it. for these few moments, she had to  
just stare out the window and wait. she  
didn't know if she should bother running,  
if it mattered or not. she couldn't think.

all she knew was that this time, when  
she heard the sirens coming from the  
streets, she'd know why they were coming.  
she'd know who they were coming for.

## Gift of Motherhood (part one)

*We need only think of how the gift of motherhood  
is often penalized rather than rewarded  
even though humanity owes its very survival to this gift  
Certainly, much remains to be done  
to prevent discrimination against those  
who have chosen to be wives and mothers*

*Letter to Women, Message of His Holiness  
POPE JOHN PAUL II, July 10*

“he started in on me again last night,  
he had too much to drink, and came home,  
drunk, and started yelling at me. he  
got home at ten-thirty but wanted to know  
why his dinner wasn’t warm. and he wanted  
to wake up the kids and play with them,  
but i told him it was a school night and  
they needed a full night’s rest. i swear,  
i can’t tell anyone else this, i have to  
keep telling everyone i fell down the  
stairs and i burned myself when i was  
cooking dinner and i tripped over one of  
the kids’ toys or a vase from the book-  
shelf i was cleaning fell and hit me in  
the face. i’ve come up with a lot of  
excuses, i know. but what would the kids  
do if i lost him? how could i work and take  
care of them? how would they be able to  
go to college? i know i keep making up  
excuses, but i have to. for the kids.”

# Thank You, Women Who Work (part one)

*Thank you, women who work  
In this way you make  
an indispensable contribution  
to the growth of a culture  
which unites reason and feeling,  
to a model of life ever open  
to the sense of "mystery"*

*Letter to Women, Message of His Holiness  
POPE JOHN PAUL II, July 10*

Thank you, women who work  
because you take on the responsibilities of men  
while still having to be mothers, wives  
good little daughters and feminine creatures

Thank you, women who work  
because you are the ones we can blame  
when the family falls apart

Thank you, women who work  
because you make a point to do more  
than your fair share  
without being paid fairly  
even though  
no man would do the same for you

Thank you, women who work  
for you know you have to prove yourselves  
over and over and over again  
and that it still isn't enough, so  
keep up the good work,

ladies

# Coslow's

I am back  
at my old college  
hang-out

years later

sharing some beers  
with an old friend

then i remember  
being there  
with a friend  
who used to  
work there

she told me about the  
women's bathroom

in all my years  
I had never  
been there

she said  
women write on the wall  
at the left  
of the stall  
women write  
that they've been raped

they name names

there were arrows  
pointing  
to other women's  
messages  
saying  
"i've heard this before"

first names  
last names

when she told me  
of this  
years ago  
i walked in  
read the names  
and wrote down one  
of my own

i forgot about that wall  
until now  
and i am back  
just yards away  
from the  
bathroom door

i get up  
walk  
open the door  
years later

all the names are still there  
jake jay josh larry matt scott

i can even still see  
my own writing  
it didn't take long  
to find it

Look, over here, in my living room.  
You left an empty bottle of beer  
on the end table. The cap, too.  
And come here, follow me, over here,  
in the kitchen, look in here, see,  
you left some of your food in the pantry.  
A box of spaghetti, some canned  
tomatoes. And come here, in the bathroom,  
I know you probably won't notice this,  
but here, this towel, it smells like  
you, is smells like your shaving cream.

Why did you have to go. Why  
does this have to seem so hard.

## All These Reminders

Okay, look here, the remote for the  
television is on the arm of the chair,  
where you always leave it. And the cocktail  
table, it's pushed forward on one side  
because you'd always rest your feet  
on it. Everywhere I look around me,  
I see something that you affected.  
I look in the kitchen. I look in the  
dining room. I look in the mirror.

Why did you do this to me. Why  
couldn't you have made a clean break.  
There's still some of your messages  
scribbled on scraps of paper next to  
the phone in the kitchen. And look,  
the pillow on the couch is bunched  
up because you could never get  
comfortable with it. And over here,  
the phone books are out on the  
kitchen counter, you never put them  
away, and here they are, still sitting  
out, I'll have to put them back in the  
cabinet. and look here, why do I  
still have all of your love letters  
stuffed into a drawer in my desk.

When you left me, why did you  
have to leave me all these reminders.

**She Told  
Me Her  
Dreams  
(one)**

we were at some sort of showing  
some sort of exhibit  
where they were displaying the glass

sculpture, it was eighty-three  
billion years old, and it was  
more smooth than anything

and it went on and on, one smooth  
curve after another  
it was so old

they displayed it on the water  
was it a lake, or the ocean  
it rested on the water, religiously

and I was in the water with someone  
a man, I don't know who  
and we were swimming around it,

touching it  
he was on the other side, told  
me to swim under it

I didn't think I could make it across  
but I went under, across I went

I kept feeling the sides, the smoothness  
somehow, transcribed along the  
sides of the sculpture, was a  
time line, a record of history

there's wasn't much at eighty-three  
billion years ago, but there was  
more and more the closer we got

to present

I remember reading Lyndon  
Johnson's name, and then I saw

information about the future  
it was all on the glass, I was  
looking at it, but I can't remember

what it says

# Childhood Memories (one)

I was in the basement, the playroom  
that's where all my toys were, you see

and I had just run in there  
after yelling at my family  
sitting in the living room  
"I hate you"

now, I've never said that before to  
my family, nor would I ever say  
it again            I knew better

and I had just run into the playroom  
slammed the door shut  
I couldn't have been more than five

and I ran in, and I looked for things  
to put in front of the door so they  
couldn't open it and find me

I took one of my chairs  
from my little play set  
and dragged it over to the door

then I took the little schoolhouse for  
Fischer-Price toys, the side opened  
up, it had a blackboard and everything  
I took that little schoolhouse, put it  
on the chair guarding the door  
patiently obeying my orders

I was running around looking for  
something else I could carry  
to the door  
when I heard the door knob turn  
and my sister, with one arm  
pushed all of my toys away  
and opened the door

I knew I had been defeated

# Christmas Eve

we made dinner  
fettuccini alfredo  
with chicken and duck

vegetables  
bread

we ate  
couldn't finish everything

we were putting on our coats  
getting ready to go  
to midnight mass

i decided to pack up  
our leftovers  
give them  
to some homeless people  
on the main street

we got in the car  
and drove  
to broadway and berwyn

i got out of the car  
walked over to a man there

asked him if he was hungry

i got the bowl of noodles  
and the gallon of milk  
out of the car  
another man walked over to me

i told them to promise  
that they would share

i got in the car  
we were just driving

and all i could think  
was that these two men  
were in the cold  
eating pasta with their fingers

on Christmas Eve

# Flooded War Memories

it was st. patrick's day,  
went to another country to see you

met up with you at a hotel  
it was like we were never apart

we talked like old friends,  
old war-time veterans

who fought in a war together  
who shared our life stories

while sitting in a trench together  
waiting for a bomb to strike

it was st. patrick's day,  
and everything seemed normal  
and right

even though you lived far away  
and even though we had different  
life plans

it was st. patrick's day,  
i remember you laying down

in the bath tub, like a little boy,  
splashing and playing in the water,

not even flinching that i was there  
talking to you, naked in the tub

it was st. patrick's day,  
i wanted to get out, see the town

and you didn't want to move  
content in a dingy hotel room

all i could think was that  
it was st. patrick's day,

and i was in another country,  
i wanted to get up and go

and i don't know what snapped  
in you on st. patrick's day,

but i was in a dress, ready to go,  
and you knocked me down

i remember being knocked on to  
one of those hotel beds

in my panty hose and dress,  
and you strangled me

it was like you were in the war again  
and you were fighting to the death

but i thought we were on  
the same side

why are you trying to hurt me

and like a bull dog that finally listened  
to the commands of their master,

you finally stopped, and  
there i was, your ally,

the one that sat in the trenches  
with you all those years ago

torn panty hose, bloody knees

i never thought you'd fight  
one of your buddies, i swear

\*

i got out and called for back up  
in the hotel lobby

at the pay phone an older woman  
came up to me, asking  
if i was all right

her question stopped me  
from hyperventilating

i looked down at my torn hose,  
bloody knees

and I said,  
i'm fine

\*

i just knew i had to get out of there  
before more shells fell

# There I Sit

there I sit

I sit alone  
separated  
isolated  
away from my only love  
my obsession

I pull out  
a fountain pen  
I look  
at the lines  
the contours  
of his face

defining  
the piercing  
eyes  
the pointed  
nose  
the tender  
lips

I feverishly  
draw  
I sketch  
I capture  
his image

I stare  
I gaze  
I memorize his every detail  
but he never looks back

so I will draw  
until my  
fountain pen  
runs dry

## other Horizons

I live in the basement  
it's all I can afford  
nothing grows there

but I would have a little plant  
at my office desk  
every morning  
water it watch it grow

I'd take on all those tasks  
I'd even have my own partition

I live in a room  
with no view  
but I don't need one  
no oceans, no skylines

when I make it  
I'll look out the window  
at the whole damn city

## Signs of the Time

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

# Conversations, A Day of Grieving, 01/22/04 (v)

i am a teacher  
i teach high school in the suburbs

it's not like the city  
there aren't gangs and drugs  
but it's so stressful

i also try to counsel my students  
one girl  
pregnant by her boyfriend  
got an abortion

that night  
he raped her

that was his present to her  
after she aborted his baby

what do i say to her

and what do i say  
every day  
when i see  
the rapist

he's a student  
in my seventh hour class

this week alone  
i did two suicide interventions  
i counseled two teenagers

how am i supposed  
to go to sleep at night

i sit in bed  
awake  
and worry

## About the Author

Janet Kuypers has a Communications degree in News/Editorial Journalism (starting in computer science engineering studies) from the UIUC. She had the equivalent of a minor in photography and specialized in creative writing. A portrait photographer for years in the early 1990s, she was also an acquaintance rape workshop facilitator, and she started her publishing career as an editor of two literary magazines. Later she was an art director, webmaster and photographer for a few magazines for a publishing company in Chicago, and this Journalism major was even the final featured poetry performer of 15 poets with a 10 minute feature at the 2006 Society of Professional Journalism Expo's Chicago Poetry Showcase



She sang with acoustic bands Mom's Favorite Vase, Weeds and Flowers and the Second Axing, and does music sampling. Kuypers is published in books, magazines and on the internet around 9,300 times for writing, and over 17,800 times for art work in her professional career, and has been profiled in such magazines as Nation and Discover U, and was nominated as Poet of the Year for 2006 by the International Society of Poets. She has also been highlighted on radio stations, including WEFT (90.1FM), WZRD (88.3FM), WLWU (88.9FM), WSUM (91.7FM), WLS (8900AM), Q101 (101.9FM), the internet radio stations ArtistFirst.com, chicagopoetry.com's Poetry World Radio and Scars Internet Radio (SIR). She has also appeared on television for poetry in Nashville and Chicago, and was interviewed on her art work on Urbana's WCIA channel 3 10 o'clock news.

Inducted as a Poetry Ambassador during Poetry Month in 2006 & 2007, and nominated to be Poet of the Year in 2007, Kuypers turned her writing into performance art on her own and with musical groups like *Pointless Orchestra*, *5D/5D*, *Order From Chaos* and *The Bastard Trio*, and starting in 2005 Kuypers ran a monthly iPodCast of her work, as has morphed her Internet radio station (JK Radio) to become a part of Scars Internet Radio (SIR) — she even runs the Chaotic Radio show (an hour long Internet radio show) through BZoO.org and chaoticarts.org. She has performed spoken word and music across the country — in the spring of 1998 she embarked on her first national poetry tour, with featured performances, among other venues, at the Albuquerque Spoken Word Festival during the National Poetry Slam; her bands have had concerts in Chicago and in Alaska; in 2003 she hosted and performed at a weekly poetry and music open mike (called "Sing Your Life"), and from 2002 through 2005 was a featured performance artist, doing quarterly performance art shows with readings, music and images.

Kuypers has had 43 books of poetry, prose and art published, including three collection books in 2004, *Oeuvre* (poetry), *Exaro Versus* (prose) and *L'arte* (art). For a list of all books, visit <http://www.janetkuypers.com>.

# Slinging the Word

Janet Kuypers

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Sulphur and Sawdust , Slate and Marrow, Blister and Burn , Rinse and Repeat , Survive and Thrive, (not so) Warm and Fuzzy, Torture and 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, 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, Thoma at Tea, Crashing Down Nineteenth

**Compact Discs:** *Mom's Favorite Vase* the demo tapes, *Kuypers* the final (MFVInclusive), *Weeds and Flowers* the beauty & the desolation, *The Second Axing* Something is Sweating, *The Second Axing* Live in Alaska, *Pettus & Kuypers* Live at Cafe Aloha, *Pointless Orchestra* Rough Mixes, *Kuypers* Seeing Things Differently, *SD/SD* 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* Contact•Conflict•Control, *the DMJArt Connection* the DMJArt Connection, *Kuypers* Questions in a World Without Answers, *Kuypers* SIN, *Kuypers* WZRDRadio (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 CDset), *DMJArt Connection* Indian Flux, *DMJArt 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 CDset) etc. (audio CD, 2 CDset), *Chaotic Elements* (2 CDset), *Chaos in Motion* (6 CDset).