

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Joanne Kyger**

**- 23 poems -**

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## Joanne Kyger (19 November 1934--)

Joanne Kyger is an American poet. Her poetry is influenced by her practice of Zen Buddhism and her ties to the poets of Black Mountain, the San Francisco Renaissance, and the Beat generation.

### Overview

Kyger studied at the University of California, Santa Barbara, before moving to San Francisco, in 1957, and becoming involved with the poetry scene around Jack Spicer and Robert Duncan.

In 1960 she joined Gary Snyder (whom she had met in San Francisco in 1958) in Japan. They were married on February 28, immediately after her arrival. She later travelled to India with [Snyder](http://www.poemhunter.com/gary-snyder/), [Allen Ginsberg](http://www.poemhunter.com/allen-ginsberg/) and Peter Orlovsky, where she met with the Dalai Lama. She returned to the United States in 1964 and her first book, *The Tapestry and the Web* was published the next year.

In 1965, she married Jack Boyce. They separated in the early seventies.

Kyger has published more than twenty books of poetry and prose, including *Going On: Selected Poems, 1958–1980*, (1983); and, *Just Space: poems, 1979-1989* (1991). She has lived in Bolinas since 1968, where she has edited the local newspaper. She has also done some occasional teaching at the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics of the Naropa Institute, in Boulder, Colorado.

In 2000, her 1981 collection of autobiographical writings was republished as *Strange Big Moon: Japan and India Journals, 1960-1964*, which Anne Waldman has called "one of the finest books ever in the genre of 'journal writing'".

More recent poetry collections include *God Never Dies* (Blue Press), *The Distressed Look* (Coyote Books), *Again* (La Alameda Press), and *As Ever: Selected Poems* published by Penguin Books.

Her most recent book is *About Now: Collected Poems from National Poetry Foundation*. It won the 2008 PEN Oakland Josephine Miles National Literary Award for Poetry.

In 2006 she was awarded a grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award.

Works:

Just Space: Poems 1979-1989 (1991) Black Sparrow Press. Illustrated by Arthur Okamura.  
Strange Big Moon: The Japan and India Journals: 1960-1964 (2000) North Atlantic Books. ISBN 978-1556433375. Originally published in 1981 by Tombouctou Books as The Japan and India Journals, 1960-1964.  
As Ever, Selected Poems, (2002) Penguin. Edited by Michael Rothenberg, Introduction by David Meltzer.  
About Now: Collected Poems (2007) National Poetry Foundation.

**[He is pruning the privet]**

He is pruning the privet  
of sickly sorrow desolation  
in loose pieces of air he goes clip clip clip  
the green blooming branches fall—they're getting out  
of hand' delirious and adorable what a switch  
we perceive multiple  
identities when you sing so beautifully the shifting  
clouds You are not alone is this world  
not a lone a parallel world of reflection  
in a window keeps the fire burning  
in the framed mandala, the red shafted flicker  
sits on the back of the garden chair in the rain  
the red robed monks downtown in the rain a rainbow arises  
simple country practices thunder  
lightning, hail and rain eight Douglas Iris  
ribbon layers of attention  
So constant creation of 'self' is a tricky  
mess He is pruning the loquat, the olive  
which looks real enough in the damp late morning air

May 15, 1995

Joanne Kyger

## Buddhism Without A Book

Well, you had to find it some  
where another person passed simplicity  
on to you, the practice of some syllables  
the position of a seated body and you believe  
a lineage of recognition of 'mind'

not perfect, but intimate  
with suffering  
and the futility of maintaining  
those troublesome states  
of fear and hate

'Try this  
Lift the corners of your mouth slightly  
and take three breaths  
this is known as mouth yoga' ( \* Yvonne Rand)

It has nothing to do with smiling  
It has nothing to do with happiness

MARCH 7, 2003

Joanne Kyger

## Descartes And The Splendor Of

DESCARTES AND THE SPLENDOR OF  
A Real Drama of Everyday Life.

In Six Parts.

. . .

### PART IV

I reject as absolutely false all opinion in which I have the least doubt. As our senses often deceive us I assume they show us illusion, and must reject them. As reason is subject to error, and who can offer more living proof of that than I, I must reject the faculty or reason.

Finally I am aware that I am only completely and confidently aware of all this rejection and doubt. This is all I can be sure of, this spinning out of my head. HENCE I arrive at my First Fundamental Truth. I THINK hence I AM. OR I Doubt hence I Am; or I Reject hence I am. You get the picture.

However this I is of the Mind, and wholly distinct from the Body. But then further clear reasoning brings me to this: IN ORDER TO THINK, IT IS NECESSARY TO EXIST. I never saw a dead man think, I never hope to see one, but I can tell you any how, I'd rather see than Be one. Dead men don't think. And therefore, everything we exactly and truly know, like THE REASONING ABOVE is because it is CLEAR AND DISTINCT.

I realize that to doubt is a drag, and a Perfect BEING would accept everything. But from WHENCE DID I GET MY IDEA OF PERFECTION!!!!!! PLACED IN ME BY A NATURE, BY A NATURE IN REALITY MORE PERFECT THAN MIND and WHICH EVEN POSSESSES WITHIN ITSELF ALL THE PERFECTION OF WHICH I COULD FORM ANY IDEA, that is to say, IN A SINGLE WORD, MOTHER GOD.

Without this idea of the perfection of MOTHER GOD we should not exist.

Imagination is a mode of thinking limited to material objects. AND THE STUFFY MIND ASSUMES IF YOU CANNOT IMAGINE, something, IT DOES NOT EXIST. WHICH IS beside the point and off the argument if not completely irrelevant to this text by which I am following myself in glory and splendor. AM I A BUTTERFLY DREAMING I AM ME or ME DREAMING I AM A BUTTERFLY or am I MOTHER GOD in Glory and Splendor? Our ideas become confused because we are not WHOLLY PERFECT and our razor sharp reason must be wielded at all times to guard against ERROR, error of IMAGINATION and error of the SENSES.

Joanne Kyger

## Earlier

Into the party, with engraved invitations, I am bored when  
I realize the champagne in the decrepit bowl is going to get  
filled up a lot. Well then, on the greens in front of the  
Mansion are walking Tom Clark and Ted Berrigan, what chums!  
Do you think I could possibly fall in step, as they turn same  
to far flung university on horizon, gleaming. You bet your  
life not. The trouble, says Ted, with you Joanne, is that  
you're not intelligent enough.

Joanne Kyger

**from Joanne**

'JOANNE is a novel from the inside out.'

what I wanted to say  
was in the broad  
sweeping  
form of being there

I am walking up the path  
I come home and wash my hair  
I am bereft  
I dissolve quickly

I am everybody

Joanne Kyger

**from 'Marian Lopez Calixto's Story,' (Visit to Maya Land, Fall 1976)**

In the time of the ancients  
the earth went dark for 5 days  
and they broke many pots  
    and the pots spoke  
And the demons in the dark came forth  
from them:  
The lion, the snake, the jaguar  
And the people perished from them.

The little children sprouted wings.  
'You will die mother'.  
And the child went outside  
    at once  
And changed into a bird  
And the children survived.

At dawn, no single person  
left alive  
Only birds,  
Jay, woodpecker, sparrow . . .

The the people were transformed. They were good  
    again. The sun came out  
    in the soft white radiance.  
And our father in heaven came down  
to make some other people  
    First from clay

But they couldn't move well  
and he destroyed them again  
    Pulverized the clay  
and prepared the clay  
    and made the clay alive.  
And looked for food for them  
    But they didn't like the grasses  
he gave them  
    so he gave them  
    the delicious part  
    of his thigh  
And they fought trying to take it away  
from eachother.  
'It must be that they like my body then'  
    said our father.  
    And the clay  
began to talk  
    and became human  
one part man, one part woman.

Hellooooooooooooo

Are you here now?

I am here now

Are you here?  
I am here.

Have you come here?  
I have come here.

Will you drink a little  
to sweep away the fear?

Breathing the gods, getting the goods

I dreamed I went to see the officials  
of our town  
They were seated at a long table  
I was handed a basket  
Inside the basket were many flutes  
I chose one,  
one that was not too new.  
I had been given the soul of the flute  
That is how I can play  
the flute today

Just not too far away, the dreams  
just on the other side,  
of this lazy after comida dream  
the Dutch students playing ping pong  
and softly talking on the other side  
of the courtyard; Beach Boys from the boys'  
room.

Now vast sky of clouds move over  
Now the sun warms  
the land's dreamy Espanol

my lord  
I, Joanne  
where, am I in time  
Me is memory  
through the courtyard door  
take me out, take me out

Joanne Kyger

## from 'Places To Go'

This is the ghost one I was referring to.

II

My Place was loosing the  
great beauty that came on horse reaching out to me as I lay  
locked, no I won't and running after, I want I want. Nearly  
falling like a ghost, telling it like a ghost, becoming wet.  
Waiting.

I'll take it out again, the asking for candy and sweet in  
the woods where they go. I know of course, and can't get  
through, just skating on thin ice out of danger bringing them  
candy and sweet away from the toes, being caught.

So then there seemed to be many things. She almost caught  
me, as I looked up and was falling or I was looking down and  
was falling. This was there worry.

I didn't know how far  
it could extend, where ever the first move is to be made.

They hammer on the trees in the woods those boys, wearing  
white shirts, and guns.

III

Now it sours. The things I made, I guess, are all a result,  
held away, the latter portion blooms.  
Evelyne watched all  
the way through, the medium, rattling around, how, was it being  
sized up, when it is being left, unattended.

I can see now  
whay I cut it away and called it my own. They were cut away, the  
swhole world blooms. I cut the dead branch off the honeysuckle,  
it started out last June going halfway up the porch.

It is better now the dead portion is cut away. It is still  
true that I can fold, I mean the room can tilt, but half and  
hald, that's how it blooms.

I don't know it exactly, but he was struck blind when women  
had pleasure the most that they did not want to hear; or saw  
wrongly. Was he born one way and then the other. But he knew  
both as a man, lay dying, along the stream of blood to talk.

One side sleeps, the other awakes. I would not worry of dream,  
if I were you. It does not lurk, Saying it now, if you care to  
remember, oh, Did I say that?

Nobody knows what they want. They  
can plan it out and get thta beautiful construction, I mean  
mine is the most beautiful but I never get what I want. You

can't put the rocks in your mouth on the seashore, rub them  
in your eyes.

V

Came up on a horse. Those  
days were like breaking through sunlight, where the sand would  
bite at the feet. God is with you. I do poems before I go  
to sleep, these are dream poems, there is Snow White's bottom.

How high are the fences around? There are still areas to  
play in, washing hair, poor Joanne. Margaret took her first  
bite by herself.

And the terrible boredom, waiting, in the sun, with a house  
folded of cardboard and crayon people against the walls. Carrots  
the girl next door, and we ate them.

Also the stone road goes  
down perilously, the same pier awash, the water slide into the  
deep depths.

Joanne Kyger

## Here in Oaxaca it's the Night of the Radishes

Here in Oaxaca it's the Night of the Radishes  
Now I wave from the green  
balcony above the gardenia  
in my shoes without socks the sun  
is frankly generous  
today when everyone needs  
room at the inn Time to put  
the buddha back in place  
He doesn't mind being `catholic'  
in Mexico  
Part of the long preliminaries of the days  
preparation  
for carving through the red skin

DECEMBER 23 TUESDAY

Joanne Kyger

## Influences in Poetry

Dream:

In a room getting ready for a party  
with Dotty,  
Duncan MacNaughton comes in and says  
'Stephen Rodefer is on his way here to kill you!  
You'd better hide.'  
We run to the bathroom  
and lock the door.  
Come to think of it  
Duncan looks pretty strange himself.

'There's only room for one  
at the top of the steeple'  
-Robert Frost

Joanne Kyger

## **Morning is such a welcome time. It doesn't demand**

Morning is such a welcome time. It doesn't demand  
much from the pocket- Some coffee, a cigarette,  
and the day starts, full of optimism & clarity of hope  
While the Muse holds her head, and the crazy Elementals  
hold down their wrath  
lightly under the earth's surface.

Some vague attention  
of wind stirs the golden oats  
and Ita Siamese drags her breakfast rabbit over  
the roof three  
times into the house and escorted out  
the door. While Aram Saroyan & W.S. Merwin  
debate the paucity of their fathers' feelings  
in New York Times reviews,  
the deer  
coming down the pathway still  
are my startled guests as this morning proceeds normally

Joanne Kyger



## **October 28, Take It Easier**

I wonder what the ocean is like today?  
Cold and flat, hot and flat?  
Cold and whippy,, tide out, in? The sand  
    will be warm, I'm sure  
for the sun is out today, and although not warm  
in the house  
It is in the spot I am going to now.

Joanne Kyger

## October 29, Wednesday

In a crowd of people I am suddenly elevated. No matter that the crowd follows Ginsberg and Snyder, out on a quick demonstration march thru the halls of a tall building out into the gardens, their faces among the trees as little Chinese sages grained into the wood. White walls, somewhat Grecian in the fancy takes you. I AM ELEVATING! from a cross legged position, I rise slowly off the ground in a crowd of people, easy as can be. ELEVATED! Mr. Ginsberg and Mr. Snyder frown, not so much? As they are on their busy way, as groups of people pour their respect and devotion towards them. Pour, pour-they're busy drinking it up all day in teacups. Do you think we've sent these young ladies and gentlemen in the right direction? That is to say, haven't we sent them in the right direction though.

With my back against a stone wall  
in a courtyard, I am closing my eyes and-Now if you will  
just observe me, I will move up off the ground, hopefully  
as much as a foot, two feet, grind. In my Tibetan bathrobe.  
Silence.

Joanne Kyger

## Oh Man is the highest type of animal existing

'Oh Man is the highest type of animal existing  
or known to have existed  
but differs from other animals  
more in his extraordinary mental  
development than in anatomical  
structure . . .'

Well when I think of men  
I think of them in a sexual manner  
Otherwise, I don't notice the difference, you know

being absorbed as being one just thinks 'people'  
and not 'male' and 'female' so much as someone  
to talk to. And how men are all

the same being born from Man and Woman and out  
of a woman's body commonly known as 'Mother.'

'And God said let us make MAN in our own image,  
after our likeness and let them have dominion.'

And 'Nature may stand up  
and say to all the world,  
'This was a MAN!'

And then 'I pronounce you MAN  
and wife.'

Daddy you is dandy

when you're here. Shriill and soft old Autumnal

wind blow and we are tucked below

the shallow soil where seeds spring  
up and wither quickly  
flirting madly.

I've got him now,

the beautiful one for my part

of the year here in my dark  
and expensive underground  
all mine before he is shared

and killed again by the fearless boar  
he is hunting and torn apart  
and his blood runs out and red roses and anemones

bloom and it is spring and  
he is gone again

That man about town gone again . . .

Joanne Kyger

## Philip Whalen's Hat

I woke up about 2:30 this morning and thought about Philip's hat.

It is bright lemon yellow, with a little brim  
all the way around, and a lime green hat band, printed  
with tropical plants.

It sits on top  
of his shaved head. It upstages every thing & every body.  
He bought it at Walgreen's himself.  
I mean it fortunately wasn't a gift from an admirer.  
Otherwise he is dressed in soft blues. And in his hands  
a long wooden string of Buddhist Rosary beads, which he keeps  
moving. I ask him which mantra he is doing - but he tells me  
in Zen, you don't have to bother with any of that.  
You can just play with the beads.

from Just Space: poems, 1979-1989 (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, 1991)

Joanne Kyger

## September

The grasses are light brown  
and ocean comes in  
long shimmering lines  
under the fleet from last night  
which dozes now in the early morning

Here and there horses graze  
On somebody's acreage

Strangely, it was not my desire

that bade me speak in church to be released  
but memory of the way it used to be in  
careless and exotic play

when characters were promises  
then recognitions. The world of transformation  
is real and not real but trusting.

Enough of the lessons? I mean  
didactic phrases to take you in and out of  
love's mysterious bonds?

Well I myself am not myself

and which power of survival I speak  
for is not made of houses.

It is inner luxury, of golden figures  
that breathe like mountains do  
and whose skin is made dusky by stars.

O fresh day in February  
Come along  
with me under pine whose new cones  
make flowers. In a mellow mood  
let's take anything  
and you're better  
in the peaceful flowing  
in the bech  
in the bird who flies up  
out of coyote bush,  
bob cat who crosses the road.

For who could think I could see  
the grace of other souls born, and reborn  
before in crab shells  
snail shells, the head of a grebe  
molesin, new onions up. Drawn by  
your clever sleigh of tortoise  
I listen for the melody  
to sing along.

Joanne Kyger

## Sunday in the Storm Era

'these are extraordinary times'  
so we can do whatever we want ha ha

the sky darkens  
stitching the white pillow cover

If I had my way I'd sit and watch  
the grey and poudy waves all day ...

The candle lights for Cypress  
must be down at the channel now  
where the tide rushes out  
from the lagoon and keeps on going out

way out ... remember?

now the evening sky  
looks pretty clear  
that  
was a history  
just happened

DECEMBER 2, 2001

Joanne Kyger

## The Crystal in Tamalpais

In Tamalpais is a big crystal. An acquaintance told me the story. A Miwok was giving his grandfather's medicine bag to the Kroeber Museum in Berkeley. He said this man took him over the mountain Tamalpais, at a certain time in the year. I believe it was about the time of the Winter Solstice, because then the tides are really low. They stopped and gathered a certain plant on the way over the mountain. On their way to the Bolinas Beach clam patch, where there is a big rock way out there.

Go out to  
the rock. Take out of the medicine bag the crystal  
that matches the crystal in Tamalpais. And  
if your heart is not true  
if your heart is not true  
when you tap the rock in the clam patch  
a little piece of it will fly off  
and strike you in the heart  
and strike you dead.

And that's the first story I ever heard about Bolinas.

Joanne Kyger

## The Maze

I saw the  
dead bird on the sidewalk  
his neck uncovered  
and prehistoric  
At seven in the morning  
my hair was bound  
against the fish in the air  
who begged for the ocean  
I longed for their place  
Behind the  
tall thin muslin of the curtain  
we could see his shadow  
knocking  
and we waited  
not stirring  
crouched by the fireplace  
where the ashes blew out  
later we checked the harbor  
to see if it was safe  
rather hoping  
one had gone astray  
and flunk itself upon the shore  
for all to watch

If I should weep  
they would never know  
and so I walked  
silently  
shrugging off hands  
in treacherous places  
wanting to fall

In Williamsburg, Virginia

my uncle  
pointed out the Maze  
which grew  
in the dead  
governor's garden

delighted

I went to it

and stood  
poised

inside the  
precise  
entrance  
like a long hallway  
the tightly trimmed

bushes  
held themselves  
pointing each  
leaf  
and twig  
in an unquestioning manner

white gravel  
caressed my feet

the sky disappeared  
and I  
could hear  
the sound of water  
rushing

I knew each corner  
without pausing

Held captive in a cave  
Ulysses  
sobbed for his wife  
who was singing high

melodies  
from the center of a  
cobweb shawl  
of their design

three feathers  
I picked  
from a stone  
in my path

and turning at last  
I saw  
the speckled bench  
and halting fountain  
which marked  
the end.

She  
tortures  
the curtains of the window  
shreds them  
like some  
insane insect  
creates a  
demented web  
from the thin folds  
her possessed fingers  
clawing she

thrusts them away with  
sharp jabs of long pins  
to the walls.  
1958

Joanne Kyger

## The Test of Fantasy

1.

It unfolds and ripples like a banner, downward. All the stories come folding out. The smells and flowers begin to come back, as the tapestry is brightly colored and brocaded. Rabbits and violets.

Who asked you to come over? She got her foot in the door and would not remove it, elbowing and talking swiftly. Gas leak? that sounds like a very existential position; perhaps you had better check with the landlord.

This was no better than the predicament I had just read about. Now it was actually changing before my eyes. Sometimes it will come to a standstill though, and finally the reflection can begin.

Selfless—that was the proposition. Smiling and moving instantly there was no other purpose than that which brought them there, to be in a particular place.

□2.

This time the mule gave its face away. Take your cadillac where you want to go in the morning, convertible as it might be, and enjoy a good bottle of rum.

Running on this way she used various modes of expression that were current. Nothing seemed to bring the woods any closer. What Woods, she was questioned, realizing that as far as the woods went, they were largely inhabitable through the facility of her mind. At the Philadelphia Flower Show, an ideal situation was built up. Here through various regulated artificial conditions, spring grass, waterfalls, the newly-sprouted bulbs completed her ideal concept of nature. The smell was overpowering.

All right then. She had a thing about nature, from flower show glamor and enormous greenhouses the rich cultivated.

A beauty of cultivation—in living? Hastiness did not prevent her from rising quick and ready to misnomers and other odd conclusions, throwing the telephone book to the floor, "OH OH the life I am entangled in." Four sides of it.

level, incompleated. With working possibilities.

Above was a paradisaical

Below, endless preoccupations and variations were possible. Currently in vogue were shelves, the vacuum cleaner, a new bedspread and color scheme for pillows.

Taste treats were

unresponsive. Glamor do's were out. Conversation was nil.  
Languid

she could not even find a place to languish upon that was  
fulfilling in its own way.

So out of the lifelessness that was around her,  
the grape leaves drying out, and even though the avocado was  
sprouting,

she thought, Why not fantasy? Tugging at this character and  
that, trying to push a little life in a prince or a charmer, a half-  
blind bat, dryad, the works of the story teller. Here the four  
walls of the room and ceiling became apparent again. "I ought  
to tighten down and make sure I say exactly what I mean."

And her face took on a tight pinched expression, and thrifty scotch  
economy gave her shrewd eyes in the prescribed way. Use every  
tidbit, usefully. Once upon a time there was a princess who  
had a long white fur coat with a high fluffy collar, and inside the  
coat were stitched beautiful butterflies in many bright colors.  
The princess languished. She was not sure where to sit to her best  
advantage to enjoy herself the most. She could not go in her mind  
or out. She looked at her long white hand, I am the Queen of the  
High Mountain Hag, she murmured to herself, still knowing she was  
a princess. She lay down upon the floor as if it were the garden of  
eden, the coat spread around her.

No, that poor little house she  
had built was a bore. It's better that it go up in flames, as it did.

She went down to Grand Central Station and gave away flowers.  
Some people took them and some people didn't.

□3.

I'm glad to get back. I had to repeat a rough discontinuous journey.  
Questioning myself all along the way. Was I jumping on her because  
her time had come to an end. Indeed I pounded on his arm all night,  
over his concern for this soft-spoken individual, I can see nothing  
but their softness. Me ME, and the time we might spend together,  
reading and talking, to tear away that putrid husk.

My flippancy is gone. Now I have started my secret life again,  
in transition, reminding. As the moth reminds, its feeble antenna  
groping, taken like a stalk of fern, coins of money.

All over I was shaking as the fear and tension made itself apparent.  
It was a cold night out. It was colder still between the airy gaps,  
between blankets.

You can see she is thoughtful  
as she draws the string to the bow. Where to go indeed. The  
point is brought forward and discussed very cleverly.

A sleeping angel or a sleeping troll? I was rather proud of being  
used, pushing the clothing hampers up and down the downtown  
street. Here, pleasant mentors conveyed their anxious solicitations,  
drawing from their bags, long lists of memorandum due, what I owed.  
It was a lot, if I hesitated. I choose to go on, saying this is the  
way I go, owing nothing, being that kind of person. Hung up?

That thought intrudes as the clearly marked vista is not so clearly  
marked. Certainly one supposes in all honesty, that an essential  
core of feeling blooms in each encounter. Lost under the weight  
of the garbage of who are you that you are not making apparent.  
Thus unhappy, I don't want it to be this way, and so forth.  
Not costumes, or paraphernalia, the immediate reactions.

□4.

We of course are in a family situation. Anything I wish might  
happen, but the larger situations are not real, not to be  
considered possible, discussable as to what sense of reality  
they possessed.

In the snow, the wood piled up underneath. Oh those drifting  
sensibilities. At this point it is scarcely believable that people  
gather and like each other. Eating chocolate pudding, getting  
in touch with some other sense of likeness. The form is no  
longer obvious to me. Whether they meander or are joined together  
in their senses in the mechanics or regular grooves they run along.

I suspect that in this house, this  
place that is musty and left as it was some years ago, there is  
no real fear; the objects are old and I am not familiar with them,  
only the sense that the Ghost or spirit world strikes you with  
its familiarity, pleasurable fear.

Here the familiar  
is apt to make its presence known, at any moment the unexpected  
lurk in the hall, into the room. Pieces of leather, old silken fans  
laid upon the table top, rooms filled with something left unexpectedly  
terror is the wrong combination of ignorance. It contains its own  
self with dusty fragments of velvet and fringe. 100 pieces of voice  
with no name, called it myself, as they spoke all day, sucking the  
soft slush, admitting their real deficiencies as—  
I am never sure; Oh it's that power

and disease of believing in the stale that doesn't demand a real  
climate, takes its capacity when the demons come down.

□5.

The night passes in night time. The head moving to the shoulder,  
the head rising with a frown.

In a firm voice, it doesn't matter if the hair is flying from undue  
spring breezes, the self has been raptured on the wine that produces  
appropriate madness, and sad she says, my dear the bacchanal is a  
lovely way to be rid of waste.

However, in seeing the house more manageable, one cannot even have  
fear larger than the unknown portions of the continent which  
refuses to sink.

There once was a woman  
who grew older, not that she minded, but the passage of time was  
always constant. Why does one have to contend with that she said,  
puzzled, as she got carried along, and constantly had to think up  
new coping modes of behavior. If he behaved to me thus when he was  
40, now that I am 30, I can hardly behave like that to those that are  
20, and so forth. There wasn't any model except the one she built,  
and one could scarcely believe there was no established pattern. This  
offered wonderful possibilities, but also indecision and gutlessness.

□6.

You can't see them, all bundled up, all those that choose  
to move other than where the distance seems appealing. Knowledge  
has no depth. There isn't any message to be spoken.

Wrangling, she speaks ill-advised my dear, as the cat has no  
point in laying its head down. She ought to watch carefully.

The claws. It could be  
the bent hands, as they grow, that as the fur impeaches the  
rose, doesn't make the thing she hangs her body on any realer.  
What could it be all about? The necessity to follow, balancing,  
contemplating words, as the basis of why we move at all.

Just a little touch. The leader cautioned further progression.  
I could hardly listen to the music for long. Now there  
seemed to be interruptions, pleasurable interludes, nothing  
definite, of a fragmented nature.

Certainly I wished the best  
for all. The sadder soldiers stumbled idly, as I also in the  
profound reaches of my slumber noted the elegant turns, the  
twisting statements grooving into the language building something  
to listen to. The dress made from silk. Trusting was awkward  
and not of a nature to ease any further building. Whosoever

you revere will come back tenfold upon you and lighten the burden carried as those who desire the warmth and necessity of communication.

□7.

I am sure my dreams must have been of the wrong sort. However, as dreams are reflections of inner dilemmas, how did those arise, from a day of relaxation and summer enjoyment of the fund.

Knowledge comes from what purported strike? From that which cleanses, and let us knot say "heart" but tissue. Hopefully and helpfully I have built up a language in which to talk myself to sleep. Not for purposes of letting in the cold.

However, I have found that not all blockaded against is the cold, the dreary reign of the dead, etc., and tasteless realm of the mushroom. As much can be denied as the bilious sun strives to cause an enlargement of singing in the back of the neck and the head. That is uncorraled ecstasy. I call it enthusiasm, free energy. But it has no place to land, it is bursting and unfocused; it is a real force and the counterpart of the gloomy depths.

As the pieces of the house ooze sap, blossoms and green twigs burst from the cracks. Whether or not to join in what I was half committed to see and do.

□8.

At this point, when Jack picked up the pussy willow branches, I said they can't possibly be ours for the taking, and smiled with dedication to an older Con Edison man. The buildings were like the unexplored garbage in my mind, fascinating and dirty, pulling pieces of cloth from boxes left overnight. Energy as limitless possibility, in the attempt to transmit non-energy situations.

For example, if once I stop to realize what little gets through, I am much more interested in the cover than the contents; it is difficult to find any interest in anything. Good energy displaces bad karma. And other non entities like that sort, producing flow that in its own place has a good bed, stocked well with what can be called fleet-footed fishes, and approaching places of investigation, such as relations between.

As I saw the blood flow to the surface of his skin, I forgot to watch for the telltale visions that again might come from something I have never seen; more possibly the components of what every man views. If this was a possibility, the rays from every person converging pass through the state of shock to numbness to unity without any mind at all, for this horror fits the cat on the stairs, between

the fifth and sixth rung. This is the way people glow and pulse similar to an inlet of jellyfish blocking the way, full of human life; until I who will name myself a swimmer come along and refuse to be blocked on the way, although I turn back gladly, and will again swim through for it is possible they do not kill, the sting's compounded measure is fear, and thus one not need join the broad expanse of human mouths calling people to join their ranks to comfort their newfound recognition or orifices, stomachs and legs.

I reminded myself twice there were several stories that kept continuing themselves. She ignored her face, blotched and red upon times, but fuller. Did you forget to wax and wane? Her head was full of energy brought forward and positively that what was said would turn the obvious into color, but no sense. Sense was for the thinkers. Here the thinkers forgot their word orders or sense; it was better to give them coffee, and those off worse could smoke.

I had felt very foolish when I leaned forward and grasped his hand, with effort, and his cloak slipped down over one shoulder as he shouted, which is the way. And I followed for certainly no one would follow me. As the day is cold and colder, and what comes out of the head is of its own sort and nature. These words, like Nature, and Head, Thinking and Words, repeat themselves, as the lines of landscape, attics and other closed-off sections have reprimanded themselves by repetition. Light

was such an enormous possibility. Taking sight into a frenzy, it was possible that just to look was full of excitement and wonder, for ages at a time, things appeared as beautiful, the sky, the street where cars had gone by.

I worried about certain characters: ones that never seemed to be other than puzzles to me but I was drawn to them with certainty only because there seemed to be no understanding? As when the mysteries were performed, the house then itself became distilled with reason as the pots and pans were used apparently filled with the stuff of continuity. The sorrow that each day sinks into the infertile other side of day, where voice comes out of the dark, and does its rituals. Memory has its own screen across the room to view itself, and the continuous dwelling of conjecture takes permanent form in stiff-legged walks to remind, thus on and on the breathing goes.

New York. January – March, 1967

Joanne Kyger

## Tuesday, October 28

It was a beautiful golden day  
Now a black split shape  
scuttles under  
de foot. So long, Sayonara.  
The fat cat lays down  
dozing. I could use a little rest too  
I only slept 11 hours last night,  
wrote some letters, swept the floor,  
planted 2 rows of onions, snow peas  
And now I am looking forward  
to washing my hair.

Joanne Kyger

## **You know when you write poetry you find**

You know when you write poetry you find  
the architecture of your lineage your teachers  
like Robert Duncan for me gave me some glue for the heart  
Beats which gave confidence  
and competition  
to the Images of Perfection

. . . or as dinner approaches I become hasty  
do I mean PERFECTION?

September 17, 1986

Joanne Kyger

## Your Heart Is Fine

Your heart is fine      feeling the widest  
possible empathy for the day and its inhabitants

Thanks for looking at the wind  
in the top of the eucalyptus  
dancing like someone you know  
well      'I'm here      I'm here      I'm here!'

The wind picks up  
a rush of leaves waving

wildly for your understanding  
—apple, plum, bamboo  
rooted and flourishing  
next to your home  
in the air      awake

without defect

June 17, 2000

Joanne Kyger