

I Just Lately Started Buying Wings: Missives from the Other Side of Silence

Kim Dana Kupperman

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In Kim Dana Kupperman's first book, the reader moves through what Kupperman terms "missives"—short meditations on life that traverse Kupperman's biography and the globe. We hear in "missives" the shadow of the word "missiles," something speeding, something wrenching, and indeed, throughout the book Kupperman visits places fraught with violence past, present, or impending. Post-Chernobyl Russia, shelters for victims of domestic abuse, and a divorce dispute-turned-suicide all receive complicated, riveting examination in chapters of varying length and format. Kupperman's introspective prose—the book's shining feature—haunts in places and lirts in others, giving readers a glimpse into what Kupperman thinks of as "the other side of silence."

As a writer and traveler, Kupperman often found herself scribing her adventures—at times fastidiously—throughout her time spent in Russia, New York, France, and many other locales. On one particular occasion, a visitation from Halley's Comet in 1986 France, Kupperman noted that her "compulsion with details had reached its own cosmological height. I admit now that there's something to be said in favor of having recorded so much information." Her book reflects both this diligent note-taking and her sprawling memory. Scenes throughout *I Just Lately Started Buying Wings* enrapture the reader with fascinating minutiae, often related to life's tiny pleasures: cheeseburgers over an almost-affair in New York, cucumber salad in France, cigarettes on cold Normandy beaches, her mother's predilection for costuming. We find these small pleasures dispersed throughout a broader landscape of pain and sadness, and here, thanks to Kupperman's careful prose, they make their own particular, sorrowful worlds within her own.

"If I went to the cinema or watched a film on television, if I read a book or an article," Kupperman writes, "I wrote it down." Though this revelation refers to a small window of her life, it speaks to the larger intentions of this essay collection: to write through "the other side of silence" bred from loss and survivorship, toward an understanding of life's purpose. In this book live ghosts and nuclear fallout, disease and abuse; however, readers also find moments of triumph and celebration, and revel alongside Kupperman as she, so cautioned by her mother, "care[s] for memory as if it were my child." *I Just Lately Started Buying Wings* ensures this caretaking will continue, uninterrupted and with great beauty, with each new reader of this collection.

RACHEL MENNIES (July / August 2010)

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