Waynessence
Writers and Artists at Work

The Waynessence of
The University of Akron Wayne College
Spring 2003

Waynessence, the literary magazine of The University of Akron Wayne College, is published for the campus community to provide an audience for aspiring writers and artists. All materials are published with the consent of the contributors, who accept full credit for their work.

Artists, photographers, and writers have produced their own work independently. Their proximity in Waynessence does not reflect the intentions of authors or artists.
Special Acknowledgments from the Staff:

God, for guiding us
Susanna Horn
Carolyn Freelon
Dean Jack Kristofco
Sam Sheller
Lara Kerr
All the English Faculty
Everyone who submitted to Waynessence

Editor's Note

It has been a privilege to work on the 30th year anniversary edition of the Wayne College Waynessence.

Advisor's Note

From its inception in Spring 1973, Waynessence has showcased poetry, prose, artwork, and photography by members of the College community. Technology has changed the appearance of Waynessence over the years, but those who produce it have maintained their commitment to sharing the work of College students, faculty, and staff in the best light possible. Stella McCleary, Wayne College English professor, was the first Waynessence advisor. Over the years, the number of student editors varied, as did faculty participation. It appears that Waynessence had a break in publication after 1978, for the archives fall silent until the Fall 1988 “new” Waynessence was issued as Volume 1, Number 1; the advisor was Writing Center coordinator Ruth Dean. Other Waynessence advisors included Sue Politella, history and philosophy professor; Marjorie Keil, Writing Center coordinator; and Kathy Hothem.

Within the publication itself, poetry expressing concern about the environment was particularly evident in the 1970s. Through the years, though, Waynessence writers have maintained a focus on the pleasure and pain of love, the joy and tragedies of everyday life, and cherished memories of loved ones. Artwork and photography continue to be representative of the area—town and country, nature and civilization, all with a generous dose of creativity and an eye to beauty or juxtaposition. Thanks to consistent support from administrators and dedicated work by word processing staff, Waynessence has remained a quality student-led publication. May the tradition continue for many years to come!

Susanna K. Horn
Waynessence Advisor
The Smucker Learning Center

Capture the Moment
by Kelly Topovski
(photographer and model)
Staff

Editor-In-Chief

Samantha Burkhart

Editorial Staff

Amanda Conley
John Mann II
Rae Mulhall
Josh Wade

Note: The Waynesence staff reserves the right to choose and edit written submissions as well as art and photography based on length, technical accuracy, and audience considerations.
Joy Baltzly is a sophomore majoring in mechanical engineering. She works at the College library.

Charles Callen of Orrville is a political science major and Student Senate President.

Asbury Collins

Amanda Conley is the mother of two, majoring in English.

Rebekah Diehl is a senior in high school who plans to pursue an English major next year.

Tamme Fisher an education major, enjoys photography and being the mother of two.

Derek Frautschy works for Wayne College in the maintenance department.

Amanda Giovenco of Dalton works part-time at Simply Smuckers and is a mother of two boys. She is majoring in photography/photojournalism.

Emily Lorson is an art education major.

John Mann II

Ben McConahay is from Smithville.

Amanda Morrison is an education major who loves playing music and enjoys writing, drawing, woodworking, and learning about her family history.

Cherene Nolt works as a secretary and enjoys photography as a hobby. She is from Dalton and loves to travel.

Clayton E. Samels is an instructor at Wayne College who plays dulcimer, among other things.

Josh Stadden is a theater major at Akron.

Rachel Stern of Doylestown is in her second year at Wayne College. She will be attending Miami University in the fall.

Nancy E. Stewart is majoring in Early Childhood Education and is a part-time reference assistant at the Wayne College Library.

Christina Summers is a post-secondary student and will major in Nuclear Medicine this fall at the University of Findlay.

Kelly Topovski of Wooster is a Barista at a local coffee house. She enjoys skiing, music and photography.

Emily Tresenrider
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Acknowledgment page
**The Veil**

*by Amanda Morrison*

Stars are spinning in the sky,
The hunter now is rising high.
It’s silent and still that I will lie,
As the night drifts slowly by.

The trees are dancing overhead,
And creaking as they try to bend.
The branches reach up for the stars,
I cannot measure the hours.

The wind sends shivers down my skin,
But I’m not ready to go in.
The magic is thick and the veil is thin,
My chance has come again.

Watch a bit longer and maybe I’ll see,
The darkness turn to light.
Just a little more silence and maybe I’ll hear,
The song of the stars in the night.

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**Innocence**

*by Amanda Giovenco*
Sail Away
by Kelly Topovski
The Eternal Young:
An Essay on the Epidemic Genocide of Idolized Icons and the Posthumously Born Notorious

by john w. mann II

“You are all a lost generation.” - Gertrude Stein

“If a man can bridge the gap between life and death, if he can live on after he’s died, then maybe he was a great man. To me, the only success is in immortality.”

- James Dean

“Everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes.” – Andy Warhol

Where have the muted, postmortem minstrels passed onto? A realm of shrunken lungs where whispers wrap this brazen casket and emote a golden, holy glow. Where have the poets of the lyric drear and ethereal ascended? Ink no longer liquid to bleed but forever coagulated upon the page; the passionate flow of the composition still fresh and influential, never to become stale nor frail. Where do the hoary harlequins and doomed columbines, the extinct catalysts of cultural revolution, the divine ventriloquists and mercurial-aura sorcerers of the derelict pedestal reside? Within the trembling chambers of our souls, where the spirit thrives and dances: our hearts; their blood belongs to our veins now and there remains to be recycled and exercised. Do we possess the capacity to contain the consciousness of these legacies? Who knows; our bodies are as inevitably mortal as theirs were upon their death-thrones, and our souls may not be so buoyant as to bounce into the collective hyper-conscious when our wilting season comes to claim and quiver us.

From where does this charismatic gravity of the deceased and doomed iconoclast derive? We conceive cults and shrines and sculpt idols out of grave stones to pay homage to the martyred demigods of every generation: i.e. James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, Sylvia Plath, Arthur Rimbaud, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, Jesus Christ, Tupac Shakur, et cetera into infinity; Screen divas and screaming deities, exalted poetic priestesses and earth-tethered Dyonisises, their specters severed, ejected from their bodies prematurely, yet each survived just long enough to incise a sliver of that vitality into the hearts of myriad Americans and a plethora of other artistic culture connoisseurs of the globe, their scalpels varying in form from pen to paintbrush to microphone to horn. Evangelical artists done in by the debacle of the secular, glued to this groove no more, death shroud a sequined garb. Requiems and candle-eye-spangled vigils will often follow the death of a being thought to be a sanguine spawn of the cosmos, an entity that radioactively blasted upon the scene and usurped our hearts and jettisoned for the celestial satellite to never return except in the effigy of a celluloid illusion, a pulsating page or an imitation superstar.

The legends that seem to engrave the deepest scars upon our hearts are those that by some idiosyncratic and tragic twist of fate pass away unto the solar realm in a quaking bang rather than an impotent whimper, not by
virtue of winter’s breath and withered age, but by divine intervention, accidental or predestined
disencumberment from their bodies via death-vial or vehicle or bullet marinated in cyanide and malicious envy.
Do these entities contain such delicate and volatile mysticism, a velocity so accelerated and exhausting that
they must sew their legacies within the fabric of society so prolifically and swift when still young and
vulnerable that when they do cease to breath they are deprived of the glory and gluttony of savoring the fruits
of their laborious, ingenious lunacy? Call it morbid, paradoxical serendipity.

James Dean coined the phrase: “Live fast, die young, have a good-looking corpse.” He died 24 years ripe
within the flinch of an instant, plummeting his iridescent dynamo death-car into the blind rush of an oncoming
contender on a sun-hammered California highway on a Saturday, the last day of September, 1955. His neck
whip-lashed, head nearly severed from spine and his ghost sauntered out of his limpid body and hovered
heavenward, a sly smirk upon his cherubic lips and splinters of lightening flickering in his eyes. However, the
vestige of his ghost did not escape without exception, but instead spread his tattered, renegade angel wings
across the continents and oceans of the globe and evoked a rave amongst the teenagers raging a passive amok
against the apathy of a world between wars. Upon the release of *East of Eden*, goose-flesh rippled girls
ascended into incendiary frenzies provoked by his prowling gaze and little-boy-lost and blue vulnerability, a
young, coy, seductive Valentino come to woo and bewilder us; unkeen to the ken of whether they wished to
suffocate him in their maternal embraces or go stark, lustful, ecstatic from the enchantment of his nonchalant,
sensual strut and mesmerizing tiger-eyes. Rebellious boy-men, unblessed by a messiah until yesterday and
labeled delinquent by the scrutinizing, squint-eyed, lynching neck-tie, ancient ‘wise’ ones of the tribe, saw
someone they could exalt and emulate: this hip, sneering, exuvial juvenile with the downcast, matador-glare,
debasimg the super-macho social monarchs with his devil-may-care-and-continue-to-dwell passive wrath and
unshackled attitude, a misfit, outcast hipster in a sinister, miscast outfit with a Chesterfield cigarette dangling
delectable from his lower lip, saliva tethered, smooooth wafter. Dig or swoon, whichever your predilection. To the
young and once devoid of a hero, those hungering for inspiration, levitation, a fresh sensation to slay the mid-
twentieth century, pre-apocalypse doldrums of the square melodrama, James Dean was beatific and invincible, born
unto immortality in death; a martyr to those desperate for a defiant and redesigned messiah; the consummate
encapsulation of all their concealed rage and unspoken sorrow in response to the status quo. And yet, it wasn’t
until his death occurred that he became idolized in the eyes of his self-assigned concubines and shy disciples.

Some artists/gurus remain arcane and gasp their last in a squalid, beat-town decrepit domicile/asylum(s), reduced to
the grimy dime-bottom of an unwashed pocket and a stale last meal. Such individuals the zombie-populace shuns
until an eon has elapsed and hence emerges a virginal generation who, aching to savor the untainted, vintage
culture of their unanswered ancestors, shall deshroud their

Contrast in C-129

by Derek Frautschy
primordial masterpieces once thought to be pornographic. Think of Vincent Van Gogh, the harvest-starved manic-depressive translating the substance of dreams upon canvas with paint and visceral integrity. Think of the Marquis de Sade, who ricocheted away his final salivating days banished within a sadistic sanitarium, minus quill and tongue. Think of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, scribbling ‘voca me’ onto parchment after invoking the spirit of the vine and winding his final music box. Think of Jonathan Larson, the lost son of Sondheim, who possessed a soul so buoyant and bountiful with ecstasy that his heart could not contain it and left his love lying bleeding upon Broadway’s kinetic boulevard. Think of madman Kerouac and sidekick Cassidy, roaming and moaning the monolithic continent in conquest of bop-kicks and the American Dream and never sleeping. Think of Janis, Jimi, Jim, John Lennon, Buddy Holly and the rest of the best of the dead rock ’n roll brood. Think of Juliet and Romeo and all those woebegone, desecrated hearts betrayed at the altar of romance. Think of your own final epitaph and what you wish the odyssey of your life shall mean to the children of the Armageddon Generation. Never surrender to censorship nor ignore another prodigal rogue. Allow these tempest-visions to haunt, exalt you, strut across your floor and blur your mind.

“Dream as if you’ll live forever, live as though you’ll die today.”

- J.D.

Ranting

by D. Frautschy

Meaningless chatter runs the rhyme
Darkly one must bide the time,
Find the reason as it runs
Little rivers without sums,
Ah, the record as its read
It wants to buy my daily bread,
Hear the rock sing his rhyme?
Nuclear physics by the dime
Here’s the riddle to this fun,
With one piece is the puzzle done?
Now see how evolved you’ve become,
But I’m just a native
Beating my drum
One Saturday Night...

By Christina Summers

I had been looking forward to Saturday night all week. It was the special time when I would go and spend the night at my Grandpa’s house. This was when the ritual of music and fellowship would come to life. Grandpa had many talents that he loved to showcase to me, almost as much as I loved seeing and listening to them.

When I finally reached his house, I burst through the door full of anticipation as to what the night held. The house looked as it always had. Red carpet caressed the long floor and stopped at the divider. The large entertainment case was still in its commanding place by the wall. The mass that it took up was so immense that nothing else could be placed there. It held the television, all of Grandpa’s cassette tapes, and many miniature cars and vehicles that he had collected over the years.

Grandpa was never in the living room when I arrived; he was always in the kitchen waiting. I would pass by the beloved musical instruments that had survived generations in his loving hands and wonder how something so fragile could be preserved for so long through so much.

His dining room is where a long, tense, challenging game of chess would usually take place. An expected victory would always belong to Grandpa unless he felt like being sympathetic and letting me win. The chess game was the event in the house--everyone would watch. Grandpa never looked nervous; he was always ready. Even with his king in a corner, he always came through.

Grandpa would bring the instruments out when I’d had a chance to settle in. First, would come the fiddle; that was mine. It smelled of years of smoking and hard playing. Grandpa had given it to me for my birthday. Next, came the guitar--his most prized possession. Everyone knew he could play the instrument better than anyone around. To Grandpa, music was everything, and the people who surrounded him when he first started playing in bands a long time ago would never hesitate to tell you that. They would always tell me at church, “Your Grandpa used to play with me and my band when we opened for Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys. I remember when...” Grandpa would always shrug the stories off and try as hard as he could to change the subject. He never wanted the credit for anything he did.

Grandpa struck the G-chord to tune the guitar. It was nothing but perfection. Of course, to him it was never just right. The chord constantly needed refining until it finally fit his liking. “No, that’s too sharp! Loosen it up and try it flat. No, try it this way. There it is. No! This thing is never right. I don’t know why I even try anymore.” Finally, the songs would flow. The sound was like angels singing in heaven. We played anything from the smooth flow of church hymns to the hard, coarse rhythm of Elvis Presley. Anything that he plucked
out on the strings went beautifully with the moment. It was a time when the sound was the only thing that mattered. Anyone who was there would always say, “No one plays like Ray Cyphers. The music just wraps you up and takes care of you for the moment.” I always had to agree with them. That is, until Grandpa would stop suddenly and criticize himself. Then the yelling would start.

“D@&* it! I can’t play these things anymore! I’m getting too old for this. Here, you play it! I’m going up to take a shower.”

“These things are too hard for me to play! I can’t do it. I’m gonna go smoke a cigarette!”

That’s when I would be left alone for an hour or so to play around by myself until my Grandpa could calm himself enough to return.

Later would come the stories of life. These lessons were loved and considered sacred by all of my brothers and sisters. Whenever there was a situation that was in need of explaining, Grandpa had a story for it. When my sister started losing her baby teeth, as every child does, she pulled them out. My mother would constantly tell her not to or they would come in crooked, but she kept at it. One morning, Grandpa caught her in the act and told her about the time when he lost his first tooth courtesy of his father. “I was sitting in the kitchen, minding my own business when your Great-grandfather saw me and my loose tooth. He asked me why I was pulling on it and I told him that it was loose and was going to fall out anyway. That’s when he grabbed me up off that chair and took me to the garage. While we were walking into the building, I was told to stand up against the wall and he took a pair of pliers to them. I cried as loud as I could to make him stop. He told me that if I wanted to pull out my teeth and not listen to my mother, then he was going to do it for me. So, the next time your mother tells you to leave them alone and stop pulling on them, you better listen or she’ll rip it out for you.”

Towards the end of the night, Grandpa would come into the living room and sit on the worn stool in front of the television which everyone knew was his. This stool was three feet from the television at 10:30 pm every Saturday. That was when his favorite show, *Walker, Texas Ranger* was almost halfway over. I asked him once why he waited until halfway through the show to sit down and watch, and he told me that that was when the good parts started. “I like the parts where he starts getting into fights and using all of his karate moves; although, I would like to see him lose just once.” Grandpa loved seeing the good guy win, but he would never tell that to anyone. It was like he always said, “The good people always come out on top.”

 Untitled

 by Tammee Fisher
The Great Medicine Famine

by Asbury Collins

It was a warm August morning. I can tell it’s almost three o’clock by the amount of sweat rolling off of my stainless steel watch. I have been up for a long time. Days, maybe even weeks have passed before my eyes without the lids shutting long enough to recuperate my weary mind. I feel like I am in my home, but the rooms don’t look quite right. Why is Carole Lombard standing in front of me? Maybe, just maybe, I wasn’t at home. I might have teleported my soul into one of the seats in the cultural district movie houses. Marathon’s, silver screens, and vodka, but I had quit drinking a long time ago. If I had teleported my soul to the theater, then why is my body so tired? And why is there no vodka? No. No. No. None of this can be right, but I just have to concentrate. I have to try and get my head straight.

Now I have been wide-awake for one, six, eight…twelve…nuts!! I ran out of fingers.

“Hey!!” yelled the voices of men.

Huh, what was that? It’s funny that I don’t see anyone, but I could have sworn I just heard Captain O’Jay Readmore. Now I know I have to get up and get going if I am about to begin talking with some cartoon character.

“Come down from there, right now!!” Captain O’Jay Readmore yelled.

I decided to have some fun with my psychosis. Its all part of the speed game I end up playing with myself when everyone leaves your side. “Now Captain O’Jay Readmore, you know I don’t have to listen to you, you’re just a cartoon. I am a real person, not a cartoon, and how did you get here all the way from the eighties anyway?”

Then something from behind grabs me by the arms and I feel my body become weightless, as I seem to fly through the air. None of it made any sense until I crashed down onto the side of my face and into handcuffs. Now when did the city start hiring cartoons to be cops? It was far too late, but I finally figured it out, I was being arrested.

In the car, country music droned from the back of my ears. I couldn’t tell if that twang sound was coming from my ear drum, my brain, or some singers voice. Why was I here? What were they doing in my house?

“You stupid…we weren’t in your house. As a matter a fact-you weren’t in your house. We drove by the park and saw you fidgeting on the bleachers. We shined our lights on you and you still wouldn’t respond, so we figured something was wrong. So you’ve been partying tonight huh?” The pigs had got me on all fronts. I was now to be the lamb at their Sunday feast and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

My hypersensitive ear radar kicked in when the two brutes began talking in a low deceitful tone amongst themselves. I could hear them laugh, while one watched me from the rear view mirror. He saw that my eye caught his and he quickly turned away. I was as nervous as a pervert going on a presidential panty raid. We pulled up to the emergency room gates. I knew I was going to get my opportunity to be placed in a sanitarium.

I was taken in handcuffs into a room walled with shower curtains. One cop strapped one of my hands down to the gurney, while the other cop uncuffed one of my hands. All the while a nurse took my diagnostics. This was done in such a brilliant display of teamwork that I knew they had been through this ordeal before. So I now felt that my chances of surviving had increased dramatically and this began to set me at ease.

The lights whirled around me. This twisting kind of chaos should not to be looked upon with the naked eye. I retreated my head down to the pillow, staring out of the side of my eye. Through a small opening between the shower curtains, I could see all the way down my aisle of sickness. The equation was one junkie, one sick little girl, and another junkie. By the whining noise coming from my neighbor I knew that she was a junkie. She was all hunched over her bed, half-dressed, half undressed. It must not have seemed to matter to her. I figured my neighbor and the woman at the farthest end were somehow in cahoots with each other. On the street, poor junkies will always collaborate with each other to be able cop a fix somehow. Me, I wasn’t a junkie! I was merely a racecar driver who took a wrong turn and ended up here.

The child that lay painfully in between the Methadone chorus line was a mystery amongst me. What has our care-taking facility come to? When a very sick child can be placed between two whining morphine addicts? Where do all of these junkies come from? I don’t know of any white-trash households where the patriarch holds any chemical engineering degrees. It should be obvious who made them addicts…when an outpatient treatment begins with morphine therapy for a couple weeks and then takes the sweet surrender away from them. When they come into the emergency room crying, who is to blame? Are their fixes really to blame? Well certainly not the prescription pushers that pumped your mother with Valium in the eighties, and then turned around and pumped your kid brother with Ritalin in the nineties. Guess who gets lucky enough to lay claim to the useless category of anti-depressants? Our generation does.
Tired? You must be bi-polar. Here have a few scripts of Adderal. Bored? You must be bi-polar have some Zanax. Your community has adopted you into this schizophrenic lifestyle? You must feel a little bi-polar. Oh, you don’t have medical coverage? Try this new stuff called Thorazine; it blankets, excuse me, I mean fixes everything from headaches to athletes foot.

That was over fifty years ago, and I can still slightly remember it like it happened yesterday. The year is 2056. Six years time has passed since the feeding of the five thousand festivals. That year the people lost everything they ever could’ve kept. Our government, our HMO’s, and the pharmaceutical companies have turned medicine into more of an art form, somewhat like torture. A pretty penny for your pains, and pain is our pleasure.

The government doesn’t seem to exist anymore, but it does. Government has become some sort of mental plain unreachable by mere mortals such as us. This all began at the start of President Bush’s thirty-year presidency. Back when human life once had value, and back when humanity once had rights. Bush steamrolled his way through the people-populated world with his ideals. Waging war at every turn, when he deemed that necessary. Bush is more oppressive to his people than Joseph Stalin could have ever amounted to be in his time. Stalinism is overshadowed by the collective might of the Republican Party at the beginning of the century.

Bush, more widespread than Hitler could have even dreamed of, destroying the world to have his ways enforced. Hitler only imagined a pure Aryan Europe at best. Our President set his sights much higher than race. He finally got down to the brass tactics and revealed in his politics that it was never, ever about the color of your skin. It was the amount of wealth you were worth. Once your wealth was gone you were no longer valuable. Beyond communism and light years ahead of dictatorship was pure capitalism. Without socialism, President Bush had brought the world into the ripe age of idealistic capitalism much quicker than the Food and Drug Administration could take emergency action against a Class 1 drug.

The first war was the Oil War, which began around 2003 sometime. Bush took his army to the desert to blow sand around, and the opposition came to North America and destroyed everything that they could. When it was all finished, most of the world was left a wasteland. Both sides of the globe are covered mostly in a nuclear sand and grief. Our superior reigning Kings and Queens of the land found what refuge they could in this world and laid down the plans for a perfect kingdom. A kingdom almost no one has been able to see. A life of paste, banned from a kingdom of rumors.

Then shortly after the twenty-year Oil War came the Great Medicine Famine. It was the ties between the government, HMO’s, and pharmaceutical companies that led us all to this sad state of affairs. We currently call it existence, or existing. Existence is when you live without life, and touch without feeling. Life has been invaluable for so many years now that the propaganda runs very deep in all of us who are left.

After the start of the famine, HMO’s have shuffled into large areas of beautiful land called Heaven’s. The pharmaceutical companies have become more religious than household deities. Even though there aren’t any households anymore. No personal property exists. The public has no property whatsoever outside of The Bedlam. The hierarchies of this world own all, and all is absolute. In this world if you do not own all, then you own nothing.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand Festival was when the deity Pfizer came down from Heaven and offered small vials of what was called “nice” for land. You see when the government took all of their drugs off of the market the people went into frenzy. Hospitals closed their doors. Drug stores
boarded up their windows. Everything went black market, but eventually the market dried up as well. People were snorting aspirin up their nose, while strung out on some standard issue welfare cure called Manna. Everyone had gone completely junkie. Manna was far from any fruit, and it sounds more appropriate to call it by its maiden name, Chlorpromazine.

Pfizer took the land and incorporated it all into what was called ten years ago “The Project.” Very quickly buildings were torn down in large groups. Historical buildings crushed into dust and in place of these once tall pillars of the community stand massive constructions with no windows or doors. High as the sky, and as long and as monstrous as your fears might interpret the hidden insides to one day reveal, stands it. Now it goes by all sorts of names. Though one name stands after all names, and that name is Bedlam.

Akron Memorial Bedlam covers the whole area that was once the city of Akron. It is called a Memorial in memory of the city that made this Bedlam structure possible. It’s as detailed and orderly as the circuits on the back of an electrical device, all intertwining and crossed out beyond the naked eye. This is the new sexual position of our divine leaders. There are two levels inside Bedlam, a top level for the richest who have social dysfunctions, and a subterranean level for the poorest. It is the miniature of the grand class design. No more are there any mid-level confidents, or million-dollar suburbia; now there are only two groups, the richest and the poorest. If you are not the richest, then your financial state is certain. If you have become part of the poorest class, then your new home is a spot on the floor of the nearest bedlam to your birthplace. So now, in a way, you are born in the same place that you will die. We might as well be born into canning jars.

This is the way it has been and this is the way it is going to be. I have seen the light of day, and now I can only touch the damp, dark walls of my prison. Nobody complains. Nobody is in danger of being hurt. We are all drugged up to our eyelids with morning doses of Psychotrophics, but if it is really morning can never be told for sure. The day, as I know it, begins and ends with fluorescent lights that never dim.

“Here I am! This old man confined to die amongst the mass, but alone in the darkness, where is everyone? I can hear you all rocking and shuffling in the dust.” My screams go unheard it seems, but I know people are all around me. The problem is I can’t even be sure that I really ever screamed at all. The medication is so heavy that you can’t tell what is happening for sure. It cloaks the eyes, binds the tongue in a state of constant parch, and restrains the body. I could be dead already, for all I know. This must be Hell, because only Hell has no beginning, middle, or end.

Sounds as exactly as it speaks, “Project,” while it became what is currently known as Akron Memorial Bedlam. There are many other city memorial Bedlams around the world today. But once you are put into a Bedlam, and once inside you never get to see the outside, you would never be able to tell. I know because I lived to see this thing all the way through, but children have been born inside, and all they know is what is inside.

It is now my time. My grief is over, and now comes the comfort of a vast and endless nothing. I await death like it has been due for the whole of my life. The pains are sharp and tear through my lower insides like a plow through a field. I can feel death take me over tear by tear, pain by pain. Now I can begin to feel. I feel freedom that is long due to an innocent such as myself.

The lights are fluttering away from my eyelids. My death grows nearer and my pain grows stronger. This is the easiest choice I never had the opportunity to make…

“What the Hell are you doing?” I screamed in anguish.

“Sorry sir, there has been a mistake with your catheter. One of the nurses mistakenly applied it wrong. We had to pull it back out and insert it in the correct way,” said the nurse who took my diagnostics earlier. These emergency room nurses are always prepared and ready to serve the cause to their own means.
Expecting Something

by Rachel Stern
On That Most Memorable, Superlative and Pluperfect of Mornings

by Clayton E. Samels

For over thirty-five years now, I’ve been trying to set down the story of the Great Mouse Campaign, but with little success. Basically, it is the story of how I and my friend Keith spent one entire evening after work catching mice in my living room and kitchen using traps baited with bits of chip chopped ham from Lawsons, which has since changed its name, and then drop kicking their carcasses across the lawn of the World War II barracks style apartment complex (with the very fancy name ) where I lived.

Really, it was just Keith, my friend from work, who did the drop kicking; I was satisfied enough just to drop each little dead mouse into the recessed trash can at the end of the front walk. Keith was an interesting character, and his family invited us to eat barbequed Petunia, the family’s pet pig, when he was drafted into the army. He ended up stationed in Korea, where he got bored, like most of the military over there, with just sitting on his butt for twenty-four hours a day and started in on heavy drugs. His family, besides raising pretty good barbeque pig, had a huge collection of old 78’s, including one bizarre number called “Turn on the Heat,” which sounded like something that Tiny Tim would sing. We saw Tiny Time once at a circus, but that’s a tale for another time.

The whole mouse campaign story was just too depressing for me to give it the attention it obviously deserves. Oftentimes, I would try to embellish the tale with all sorts of classical references and allusions, hoping thereby to elevate the sordid mess into something a bit more tolerable than actually reliving the events was, but no matter how hard I tried, the story always ended the same depressing way, and I just couldn’t get beyond it. Keith went home, and my wife and children went to sleep upstairs, while I sat alone in the early morning darkness, hoping to be able to spend a quiet moment appreciating finally eliminating the pests that our lousy neighbors had introduced into their apartment, and then through the paper-thin walls into ours, especially into the oven in the kitchen, but I’ll not go into that part. Suddenly (as happens adverbially in most stories), I heard a scurrying along the living room wall, behind the bookcase, which no longer had legs for some reason or other. Still one more of the little bastards! I became angrier and angrier – especially with my neighbors, especially that dumb bitch with the glass eye. (who thought it was cute to pop it out into her drink at parties and say, “Here’s looking at you!” She also thought it was cute to go to the grocery store with her baby and an empty diaper bag and stuff the bag full of steaks and pork chops, sausages, and lunch meat, leaving us more or less habitually honest customers to pay higher bills at the register to cover her deceit, but, as she always said, she was hungry, so she deserved the food. She also thought it was cute to change her hair color four times a week, now red, now blond, now brunette, now black – so often, in fact, that her scalp was covered in sores from the burning liquids she would put on her hair just to look so adorable. You really had to feel sorry for her, or at least so did my wife (my ex-wife, I might add, just to stay on the safe side of my current wife)! She also thought it was cute to try to kill herself every now and then – try, mind you, never succeed, but just enough so that I’d have to listen to days and days of her throwing up afterwards when they brought her home from the hospital after pumping her stomach. Naturally, such a noble creature as this was my wife’s best friend because she touched a chord somewhere, until my wife got a new best friend, Candy, the woman across the way whose husband, Bob always tried to talk me into coming over to their apartment to smoke dope and watch porno flics. My wife just could never understand why I didn’t find these people the most enchanting characters around. Candy and Bob also played their stereo much too loudly until one day, when I asked them to turn it down because I had kids trying to sleep, Bob gave me the finger and said, ‘Screw you!’ as if I really needed a translation. So I had my wife gather up the kids while I found the 45 rpm recording of “Pappa Ooh Mau Mau,” put it on my turntable, and cranked up the volume all the way. (In those days, the stereo was also a piece of furniture, and ours was a fine cabinet of luscious brown wood with an am/fm tuner and turntable under the lid, just like the one in the lobby of the old folks apartment building that my mother-in-law now lives in.) We drove away from the apartment complex for about four hours, leaving our dear neighbors to savor

My Rat

by Emily Tresenrider
the monotony of “pappa, pappa, ooh” to its fullest. After we returned and I turned off the stereo, I was never again bothered by their insensitivity to my children’s naptime, though I think it probably hastened our eviction from the apartments. It was either that, or my constant complaints about the mice in our building to the management, who never seemed able to get rid of them, but who, eventually, had no trouble whatsoever in getting rid of me! Perhaps it is a managerial prerequisite never to see problems, but to get rid of those who do happen to notice or be affected by them, but I digress.)

And I became angry at any number of other things, but the immediate focus of all that intense affect was that poor, tiny, thigmotropic rodent behind the bookcase. I was sitting on the floor in the semi-darkness, so I scooted as quietly as I could towards the bookcase, and finally, with a thrust of both of my legs, I pushed the bookcase, with its contents of The Warren Commission Report, the first six books of Vergil’s Aenid, Salinger’s Raise High the Roofbeams, Carpenter, and all my other treasures, up against the wall. I thought I had flattened the little bastard, but, no, after a few seconds, the poor, unfortunate mouse crawled out from the left side of the bookcase and took four or five uncertain steps along the molding and out onto the hardwood floor before falling over on its back, its feet up in the air, cartoon style, and its body convulsing a bit as its insides erupted in a brief bloody fountain, much to my immediate and everlasting dismay.

“What the hell are you doing down there?” screamed my wife.

Perhaps this was the start of things that led to her being my ex-wife. We certainly won’t go into that, but you can begin to see why I’ve had trouble putting down all of The Great Mouse Campaign coherently, although I’ve given it a noble attempt at least a score of times over the last thirty years.

I think it much wiser on my part to abandon entirely the attempt to chronicle the Great Mouse Campaign and to concentrate instead on telling the tale of a happier time, of, indeed, the happiest time that I can remember, or, if those memories are simply the false creations of the years as many think the golden recollections of one’s youth really are, then at least I can bathe in the false golden glow of that one brief, shining moment, however constructed rather than actually experienced. I don’t suppose that after the passage of so many years it really matters whether the event is fiction or not, the effect on my psyche being entirely the same, regardless. I certainly recall it as experienced, and that is good enough for me.

Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear, to the fabulous fifties (fabulous if you were under ten, at least, when television was still a new medium, radio still had some worthwhile content – or at least that old clock radio that I took apart to marvel at the interlocking fingers of its tuning capacitor did, and breakfast cereals had marvelous prizes at the bottom of the box – not a bad metaphor for how one anticipated life would unfold. Life wasn’t really experienced then like Leave it to Beaver, in spite of what they’d have you believe. We lived our Life of Riley’s, like Chester A, dressed in jeans – dungarees – and t-shirts, with siblings like Babs and Junior, with lunches in metal pails. “What a revolting development THIS is!” William Bendix would say. Now, THERE’S a metaphor for life in the universe as we know it.)

On this particular magical mystery morning, I awake early, earlier, in fact, than anyone else in the family. Perhaps this is what truly gives the morning its magical quality. I manage to get up, get dressed, leave my older brother (he was three years, ten months, four days, one hour, and ten minutes older than I and never let me forget that fact, though, of course, it was I who did the calculations) asleep in his twin bed by the window overlooking the driveway at the south side of the house, the same window that I threw a tennis shoe against in a fit of youthful temper one day, surprising myself when the pane shattered into bits that rained down on the driveway below, much to my embarrassment and subsequent pain in the posterior – anyway, that event isn’t really part of the perfect morning, so, as Cicero would say, I will pass over that fact in silence.
As I said, I leave my older brother sleeping in his own bed (as opposed to now, when he sleeps in the cold, cold ground). Out the bedroom door I creep as silently as I can, considering the creaks in the floor, over which I have no control. Out the door I scurry, I repeat, as quiet as a mouse, with the linen closet on my left and the girls’ room (and the two babies’, too) across the hall. Then down the narrow hall, past the bathroom on the left (a huge room, with a big bathtub, huge sink with separate hot and cold faucets, and ample sized toilet, all arranged on the perimeter with empty space enough in the middle to hold a square dance, though, of course, we never did. They just don’t build them like that anymore, but, then again, it would be quite expensive to heat a house with so much empty space.) and mom and dad’s room on the right. Straight ahead, down the four steps to the first landing, I walk and look out the window to the back yard. The first part of the yard was fenced in to keep Cindy, our purebred boxer, all light brown except for her black muzzle and her cream colored belly, with clipped ears and tail, out of harm’s way – but only temporarily, for Greg, one of the kids from down the street, would finally manage one day on his way home from school to throw one too many rocks at the dog, who, in response, fled through the hole in the side of the garage to her doghouse inside. Greg, not to be easily outdone by a mere dog, went inside the garage and took some straw and poked it through the planks in the side of the doghouse, taunting and tormenting Cindy further. Finally, Cindy, in a fit of furious dog rage, snapped her choke chain collar, broke through the side of her doghouse into the open space of the garage and bit Greg in the stomach. Naturally enough, Greg took that as his signal to leave and run home crying to his mother, who later in the day came up the street, knocked on our door, and in a fit of self-righteous rage punched my mother in the face. Cindy, as my father told it, ended up on a farm in the country, which, as I later learned to translate from parentspeak, meant that she had been put down by lethal injection. But that was another time, before other bitch-Cindies and bastard-Gregs, and I will pass over that in silence, too!

The window to the backyard had a splendid view of the maple tree situated in the center of the fenced in yard, and I recall sitting in the fork of the tree many a time looking fondly at the window on the first landing at the top of the stairs of the green and white, but mostly green, wood shingled, two story house, with a coal bin/fruit cellar dirt floor and a concrete floor basement around which I have pedaled my red fire truck with the wooden ladders and the silver bell at the end of a white string rope. This sitting in the comforting lap of a maple tree and looking at nothing and everything in particular predated my interest in science fiction; otherwise, I might have envisioned myself sitting up in the tree and gazing into the window at myself, a duplicate self gazing out the window at myself sitting in the fork of the maple tree. Even now, I am not sure how the laws of relativity would make such a scene possible, but the laws of poetic license certainly allow for it. Never again have I found such a maple perch so perfect for surveying the immediate vicinity, or just listening to the sounds of the neighborhood.

On that most perfect of mornings, I certainly do not gaze out the window to the backyard expecting to see myself sitting in a tree (“k–i-s-s-i-n-g” or not!) which sheds pile upon pile of leaves that I have to rake up and jump in and rake up again so that later we can burn them in the concrete gutters at the side of the street (Try that now, and see what happens!), and I am not disappointed, either. I simply see, or must have seen, that glorious maple tree in the dawn of just another day. So far, I am in the midst of reconstructed events, not having reached anything I really do recall of that morning with certainty. I most certainly did gaze out that window on many occasions, both before and after the most perfect of mornings; it’s just that I don’t recall gazing out that window on that particular morning.

Let’s move on ahead to what I do recall, then, since that seems to be the point of it all. So, fast forward down the steps to the second landing, the one at the bottom of the stairs, where there is another window to the back yard, but this one with a much less spectacular view of things, being so much closer to ground level. Also at this landing is the closet where all our coats are hung, a long way from the front door, or even the front of the living room. (People were peculiar in those days and arranged their lives and rooms in strange ways, or so it seems in retrospect.)

A nnie
by Ben McConahay
On this most magical of mornings, before anyone else in the house is up, I go through the living room with its mantle piece over the non-working fireplace, with its blond television set (showing just snow on all channels except for three, five, eight, but at least there was something worthwhile on at least one of those channels all the time) back in the days when televisions were pieces of furniture – (Nowadays, of course, one must buy the pieces of furniture and then put the televisions inside of them. What a world, what a world!) with its couch, with its red naugahide recliner, with its floor lamps, with its cheap, ratty carpet that my dad and I rolled up when the family moved on to better quarters in another part of the city, and on into the dining room, with its huge wooden table, around which we gathered for dinners and as many lunches as we ate together during the week. (In those days, meals around the dining room table, or the one in the breakfast nook on the other side of the kitchen were the norm, while meals out, even at McDonalds, were the occasional exception, which is why I was so elated at being the millionth customer at a McDonalds when we took a trip to see relatives in Michigan one year; I pestered my dad to stop and let me get something to eat, please, at McDonalds, and he relented, allowing me to get something for myself, probably for about forty-five cents, while the rest of the family would wait, thank you very much, until we got to grandma’s house. Because I was the millionth customer, I got my forty-five cent order free and spent the rest of the trip reminding everyone else how they could have all eaten anything they wanted for free if only they hadn’t been such jerks about it all!

But on this most perfect of mornings, as I recall, I am not interested in food yet or the dining room table, but in the piece of furniture next to it, especially the two doors at opposite ends of the piece of furniture. I open each door and inspect the contents of each enclosure, full of the detritus of adult life – incomprehensible papers on various subjects, insurance, business, etc., etc. Once I satisfy myself that there isn’t anything in the cabinets that I am really interested in (the magic, of course, lay in examining those secret chambers unseen by anyone else in the family rather than in the contents themselves, close to the thrill of taking a peppermint or a quarter or two from the pocket of father’s pants, but not quite, because I only examined the cabinets and did not permanently remove any of the contents. Why would I want any of that useless stuff?) I eventually move on to the kitchen to fix myself some breakfast.

Now, I must move back to the area of reconstruction of experience, because I don’t recall making myself breakfast that particular morning, but I most assuredly did. If it was a magical mystery breakfast, it was probably a bowlful of some cereal like Cheerios with lots of real milk, full of artery clogging fat! I probably topped the cereal with about six tablespoons of sugar (back in the days when cereal could boast about containing sugar and even put the word “sugar” boldly in its name), and then, for good measure, crowned the concoction with three or four tablespoons of strawberry preserves. This latter was a trick I learned one day when I found bananas in short supply around the house, so I looked for a substitute, thinking outside the box, but inside the jar, so to speak. Mmmm, mmmmmm! Again, this is a detail I recall from other mornings when I prepared my own breakfast; on those days when my dad made breakfast (mom was usually allowed to stay in bed and get a little rest), it would be something like oatmeal with brown sugar on it and a few slices of toast. On Sunday mornings, of course, after church, there would be huge affairs of scrambled eggs, sausage, toast, milk, tomato and orange juice, coffee (but not for us kids) and then the glorious Sunday paper with several sections of comics, but on this morning of mornings, I make due for myself, dragging my spoon along the bottom of the full bowl, dredging through the undissolved mass of sugar.
After this most blessed of breakfasts, I go to the real heart of the matter, the greatest of goings-on, the most superlative of happenings, the most pluperfect of events, the most memorable memory of the morning. I go out through the front door, which, for some reason, is at the side of the house, and out into the driveway, a muddy, rutty affair that leads from the street to our ramshackled building of a garage. I often risked life and limb to clamber up the old crabapple tree and jump over to the garage roof to walk around, encouraging Cindy to leap up and sink her front claws into the edge of the roof and try to drag herself up onto the hot, tarry shingles. She never made it up there, but she would never fail to try, over and over again. Such is the single-mindedness and steadfastness of purpose of dumb animals.

On this day, however, I simply go outside to see if I can attract a couple of local squirrels and convince them to accept a handful of peanuts from me. I am not sure whether I got those peanuts from a cellophane package of Mr. Peanuts from the store (a gesture of casual disregard of the money to buy treats for myself, and, thus, an indication of the preciousness of the gift to the squirrels) or simply a handful of nuts from a can of cocktail peanuts that my parents got for a party (in which case, just another handful of things taken from my parents and simply put to another use on the spur of the moment). In any case, I manage to attract a squirrel or two by making squirrel-like noises the way my grandfather (actually, my step-grandfather. Both of my real grandfathers were long since buried in the cold, cold ground, but my step-grandfather carried on well enough like a real grandfather to be more than accepted as such by me, especially after he exchanged several of my Mad Magazines for the mush more stimulating Playboy magazines that he had around for some reason. “Here, quit filling your mind with trash. Read one of these.”) taught me.

Once the squirrels are close enough, they recognize (see or smell, I cannot tell) the peanuts, and soon are happily chewing away while I am happily watching the little critters. This is certainly much more cool than feeding the ducks in the lake pieces of stale bread my grandmother gave me ever was. Once you attracted one duck, you attracted three score, and they mobbed you noisily until your store of bread was gone. There was a time when feeding the ducks was quite an experience, and I passed that along to my own children. I still LIKE feeding the ducks; I just like feeding squirrels much, much more, and on this morning, I have what I consider to be the ultimate squirrel feeding experience.

It is difficult to imagine anything more perfect than feeding peanuts to the squirrels in the quiet morning before anyone else in the house gets up, but there is more on this day to remember. I breathe the fresh air, expanding my lungs to capacity, not really knowing, as Jackie Gleason would say, “How sweet it is!” but, still, having such a reaction, at least on the cellular level. Then I hear the cardinals. Of course, I am just an ignorant kid and don’t know that they are cardinals. All I do know is that I hear them, that and the fact that I can imitate their calls fairly well, so I whistle back to one and am soon lost in a bird dialogue, which goes, approximately, thusly:

Three sharp whistles on a rising tone (tweet, tweet, tweet), followed by a quick whistle upward with a longer whistle downward in pitch (tweet-tweeeeeeet). That is the song of the cardinal in Akron, Ohio, in the mornings of the early fifties, and years later, when I am in England during midsummer of 1984, I am impressed with how birds have such different songs in different parts of the world. I listen in vain for a cardinal to sing that old, sweet song. Oh, well, what the hell!

I cannot speak in tongues, so I don’t know exactly what that cardinal and I talk about on this most glorious and holy morning, but we talk about it for quite some time. As I look back on it now, not through a glass darkly, but still darkly, I imagine we are both saying, “Are you talking to me?” in that macho way that males have. Regardless of what we are saying, the miracle is the conversation itself, and to this day, I whistle to cardinals whenever I hear their song.

I can tell, gentle reader, that I have abused your patience long enough, so I shall bring this all to a hasty conclusion. With feasting the squirrels, with filling my lungs full of fresh morning air, with talking to the birds finally over at last, at an end, finished, completed, perfected, done, concluded, accomplished, fulfilled, and through, I go back into the house. The rest of the family gets up, and the day of days, most normal and ordinary, usual and humdrum, forgettable and unnoteworthy, continues. I proceed with my life, through its vicissitudes, its quirkiness, its moments upon moments, pausing every now and again to consider, recall, imagine, and re-experience that one perfect morning and its delicious events. As I lay dying, compressed by the utter weight of things, as the fountain of my blood surges for the final time, I pray I have the presence of mind to inhale deeply the morning air, to whistle a final song to the cardinals, and to imagine myself offering food to the squirrels (or the gods, as the case may be).
A Boy and His Bike

by Rebekah Diehl
I Am...
by Nancy E. Stewart

I am a child who lives in poverty. I think my mother loves me, but I am a burden; another problem in a long list of them. Sometimes she says she loves me, but I see a distant look in her eyes when I ask for more to eat. I think my teacher likes me, but she looks sad when I turn in my papers, smudged and incomplete. She calls me inside when the other children laugh at my clothes, my hair, all of me. She stands a long time and washes each of my fingers under running water. I am never hungry, but I am always hungry. I want acceptance and a place in the world that doesn’t hurt; a place where I will fear neither going to bed nor waking up.

I am a parent who lives in poverty. I wait in lines that never end. I weigh the importance of water versus heat. I, instead, choose a bus pass that will allow me more time to stand in more lines and be home before my child arrives. I trade my bus pass for wagers on a hope which will never be manifested, scratch-off tickets to nowhere. Is nothing better than not enough? Is it better to get stared at rather than ignored? All I want is acceptance and a purpose, means to an end, instead of endless meaningless days.

I am an elderly person who lives in poverty. Every day, Little Girl leaves for school after her mother goes out. Or, did the mother ever come in the night before? Why don’t they get some heat so it would drift up my way? If I had some more food I could ask Little Girl here and read to her. Or, she could read to me when I cannot see. What if she came and I couldn’t hear the knock on my door? I should tell her about my own granddaughter who lives out west. Little Girl could help me write to her the way I used to. I wonder if my granddaughter ever thinks about me. I wonder if anyone remembers my name. What if no one ever comes? Mine are the endless meaningless days.

I am society. I do not see the poverty around me because I have important things to do and important people to see. I have a very good job and pay endless taxes. If those people would just get a job, it would mean more for me and my kids - they could attend a better school where poor children are not invisible; they simply do not exist. I wish these busses would not block traffic so I could spend more time shopping and eating. Who rides the bus? Poor people ride it, and we know they don’t have anywhere important to go. I suppose there will always be poor, ignorant people but it isn’t my problem, is it?

I am God and I am very, very sad.

Doorway Reflections
by Rebekah Diehl
“Canis Canum”  
by D. Frautschy

Here is a riddle  
Buried in rhyme  
What can a man have,  
But not in time?  
And who can we meet,  
That has no mind?  
And what carries a loss  
In with a find?  
So lies my riddle,  
There went my rhyme

Erie St. Cemetery  
by Josh Stadden
Passing Existence

by Joy Baltzly

As I look behind,
At all the days gone past.
There is one sure thing.
Time is running out.

Just as in an hourglass,
Each grain of sand slips through;
In life, days slip by
Out of grasp, forever.

A day in progress may seem endless,
But when it is done
It appears to have passed us by
Much too swift.

The choices made in a single moment
Will affect your entire life.
No matter how small they may seem,
Someday they may be overwhelming.

Where your time is spent,
Determines who you become.
Enjoy all that you do
Even when things are crumbling.

In life you must decide,
What really matters to you,
Because when the end has come
All to hold onto are invaluable relationships.

You can never be sure how much time
Is left for a simple smile of encouragement.
We all need to comprehend
The delicacy and fragility of our lives.

Life is like a humming bird;
It flies by colorful and bright,
Quick yet graceful in the brilliance
Of the sunlight.

Once time vanishes out of sight,
It can never be seen again.
All that remains are wistful memories,
Like colorful translucent light shining through a window.

So hold tightly to every single moment you are blessed with,
Seize every opportunity with an open embrace;
For each second is a gift, not a right.
And each holds a purpose for existence.

True happiness is found in simple things,
Which are often taken for granted;
Like hugs, laughter, meaningful conversations
And tenderness revealed in the eyes of those you love.
Cleveland Skyline
by Josh Stadden
Roses
by Amanda Conley

Softly black, still they lie,
Haunting beauty revealed,
Luring me like a helpless soul
Beneath coarse shadows
And unseen thorns.
This ruse, so sweet,
So pure, it seems
My heart is fixed in desire,
My body bound by darkness.

Black Roses
by Amanda Conley
Another Thing to Argue About
by Asbury Collins

Humanity is not plastic,
That is covered with holograms and backing strips.
It does not have numbers pasted.
Humanity would almost turn your life,
Inside out.
Humanity is not Communism or Capitalism.
Humanity is not your religious belief.
Humanity has nothing to do with your,
Propaganda or make-believe,
Conflict resolutions.

Like your Terror War.
Like your Drug War.
Like your Seven P.M. Ratings War.
Like your Used Car War.

Sadly enough.
Humanity is a myth.
Humanity is becoming in a big way,
Just another ideal.

shi
by Charles Callen

Skypark
by Tammee Fisher
Rhapsody of You
(a Valentine’s Day Sonnet to My Fair Empress)
by John W. Mann II

This lass, my love, this
lithe, dancing dove:
Of what divine horizon dost
thou derive?
‘From the land beyond the majestic
dandelion-iris sun,’ she says,
in wink of a twilit,
silver dream,
‘Been times-seven born below the sanguine
ballet of the cosmic signs . . .’
A dozen-hundred blazing
constellations casting
diamonds in her eyes.

What song, what tongue, what
lyric, pure and strong,
could quiver gentle the harpstrings
of thy angelic heart?
‘A song that speaks of love’s eternal
molten, soft embrace,
and beats in rhythm to the pulses of
our hearts’ synchronous pace . . .’
And chimes in charming harmony
with the flawless symmetry
of thy symphonic face.

This ivory visage, two, ruby petals, these
sizzling, icicle, aqua-blush eyes:
Is this the silken vision the beauty for which
Aphrodite’s doom, sealed with a kiss,
was prophesied?
For I do joyous, weep and sigh, feel
my heart flex and spirit genuflect when
rosy lips unfold to find
a porcelain smile with divine precision carved:
Diamond craft, immaculate.

cont’d
This palm, ethereal wrist, these
delicate, slender digits:
What intricate, arabesque mysteries
are etched within the legend of thy
plush and tender flesh?
How could my hand of mortal mold so
perfect match the splendor grasp
of this crimson-lipt, secular Venus?
Perhaps because she chooses so,
though maybe for the fatal thread
that stretches taut between us.

But, O, what demons, screaming fiends,
what vaporous dreams, do
haunt your locomotive soul
in the phantom-womb of spasm-sleep?
How could I, thy sacrifice, of naked shield and
shadow eye, with my blood-shed
purge and deflect these vicious incubi
who besiege and deny thee peace?
I shall wrap you in my guardian arms,
and cast the blanket warm above us,
and chant a rhyme, a simple
rhapsody, a sweet
reminder of the charmed
and peaceful times there are to be,
The beasts beyond the windowsill
will cower where the talisman and
the lullabye linger,
And we, beneath the canopy, with
our fingers interlaced, within
this sacred haven-space will we
in placid limbo lie.
Winter Solstice

by Amanda Morrison

Candle burning, tall and bright,
Flickers through the longest night.
The sun so soon is out of sight,
He must for a while surrender his might.
The moon reflecting cool white light,
Is queen lady of the sky tonight.

A thousand years ago and more, the moonlight danced on an Irish shore.
With a fire lit in every home, men gathered amid ancient stones,
To watch the sun’s first rays of light that signaled the end of the longest night.

Now a candle flame is bright
Though streetlights hide it from our sight.
Moon smiles in her great proud flight,
She sees the flame from her great height,
And knows a girl has lit the light,
To celebrate the longest night.

The candle burns all through the night,
Until the sun comes into sight.
The yellow rays are telling men,
The season-circle spins again.
Spring will soon be at our door,
Each day is longer than before.

The magic has fled, the flame is dead,
The girl with the candle has gone to her bed.
The sun once more is king of the sky,
While the moon waits proudly but quietly by.
Another year will pass and then,
The Longest Night will come again.

Frozen in Time

by Emily Lorson