

Valentines for Janice

by [David Solway](#) (February 2025)



La Surprise (Jean-Antoine Watteau, 1718)

I never have been big on valentines

and always skeptical of Feb. 14
when Love's infatuates post feeling lines
on their Facebook page, or spurn the screen
and scour shelves at Shoppers for a card
cooked up by Hallmark to express the heart's
most passionate desire. As if the Bard
who renders heaven wakeful with his arts
had sold himself to manufacture truth.
As if relying on a donor's sperm,
or seeking candour at a barker's booth.
It's quite enough to make one cringe and squirm.
And yet I write this for my lady's eyes,
who finds her pleasure where her duty lies.

I thank the Lord you do not celebrate
a pagan holiday like Festivus
or something even worse like Galentine's
Day where feminists kick back and berate
their boyfriends and hubbies, saying leave us
be now, we do not care for valentines.
It's ladies praising ladies, frittatas
at an all-girls breakfast, paeans for Planned
Parenthood, cards for Beloved Bothfriends
and voices raised in malign cantatas,
ensuring that their partners are unmanned
and a world once loved and honoured ends.
I thank the Lord that you are strong and pure
and are this day's commended cynosure.

I have no poetry. Seems the Muse's
away on vaca, fled the premises,
taken it on the lam, pfttt, accuses
me of negligence, plays the nemesis
card, cold at heart. How deal with hiatus,
the gap in inspiration, dreaded fall
from grace, the vanishing of afflatus,
the loss of every scrap of wherewithal?

Maybe if I dressed in black and sported
a Cohen fedora and Yeats-like cape,
I might restore all that I've aborted
and find a way to haul myself in shape.
No cigar. One thing only halts decline:
the power of a loving valentine.

And now the day has come around again,
I'm at a loss to speak my loving mind
and all the weathered words enamored men
struggle to release, being Valentined
and razed beyond the means to compensate
for dwindled-down resources. Poor dude,
his marrow-verses uncommensurate
with all a man can feel of gratitude!
For every day with you is Feb. 14
and every day brings Cupid's marksmanship
to bear upon a target always keen
to feel the fletcher's art and sharpened tip.
So take into your heart each feathered line
as I receive the arrow into mine

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David Solway's latest book is [*Crossing the Jordan: On Judaism, Islam, and the West*](#) (NER Press). His previous book is [*Notes from a Derelict Culture*](#), Black House Publishing, 2019, London. A CD of his original songs, [*Partial to Cain*](#), appeared in 2019.

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