

Saints Poem

For twenty cents,
lady saints trapped on holy cards
roll their eyes to the firmament.
Everywhere, the sunset
a pale stream of light
squeezed between grey clouds.
Saint Lucy holds her eyes on a dish,
Saint Agatha proffers her breast on a platter,
Saint Cecilia holds frozen fingers
over a phantom keyboard.
We expect so much from saints:
Women must be cunning, renewable virgins,
men, willing, human sacrifices.
We expect our saints to hang forever
in gold edged, Victorian picture planes.
Mary, mother of Jesus, eternally mournful,
never thought she'd see him crucified so many times.
What kind of loving God expects
any mother to put up with that ?
Believers want blood.
Parochial school girls eye St. Sebastian cautiously.
Torn between two trees, his attenuated
limbs ooze blood from tiny wounds.
Arrows draw the viewer back again and
again to plump, sweating limbs:
to perfect classical proportions
confined by strained rope.
We expect so much from saints.
Within their tortured expressions

lie the fettered hopes of multitudes.
For twenty cents the pictorial essence
of Christianity can be possessed
by any school child.
Role models don't come easily these days.
Twenty cents,
not a lot to pay for a martyr.