

# THE SPOON RIVER Poetry Review

*David Bond*

Calendar of Saints

Actually a tapestry  
illuminated, immense

Flemish, French, Burgundian  
who knew such things

or even how my ancient aunt  
acquired this relic

stale with sanctity  
this low-warp imitation

of sacrifice divine  
that covered half a room

tempted me to study  
each day's martyred saint

each day's featured bloody way  
of dying for the One True Church.

So blessed I was in childhood  
to witness men and women

perennially thrown naked  
on burning beds of coal

sliced on wheels and razors  
skewered by arrows

stretched on creaking racks  
killed by sharp or dull knives nibbling

first at fingers, then toes, etc.  
flesh torn off by iron meat hooks

flesh pureed by combs and rakes  
a few simple beheadings

breasts cut off (always women's)  
a smashing out of all teeth

plunged into boiling cauldrons of oil  
crucified, regularly and upside down

attacked by leopards, bears, wild boars  
gored by wild cows

dispatched with a lazy-throated sword thrust  
stripped and lain on an icy lake

having hundreds of sharp reed spikes  
inserted into the body

placed in a wine press  
starved to death

injected with carbolic acid  
and horse-whipped

from everlasting to everlasting.  
I didn't even think of asking

about the scores of unenlightened pagans  
caught in the midst of hard ideology

and the scandal of particularity.  
For I was too taken by saintly mystique—

the tortures I feared simply  
by sound, *strappado*, *flagellation*,

*bastinado*, the awful obedience,  
such a defiant attitude

some even throwing in final jabs  
of Christian sarcasm.

My favorite: Lorenzo  
patron saint of cooks

martyred on a heated gridiron  
who said, reportedly, while roasting

“Turn me over, please,  
I’m done on this side.”