

fictional tales, sports sagas, biographical accounts, our own myths and legends. And in this telling and sharing, Bly believes, and I share this belief, we initiate a pathway to our continuing development and to what Bly terms "positive male energy".

What is remarkable is that the men in this Club, over a period of many years, have created a fellowship and a forum, that has generated the quality of development and positive male energy of which Bly speaks. We can again salute our predecessors. What I hope for is that we can make it easier and even more attractive for the Club to bring in young men to be initiated and immersed in our ways, to carry on the good work. And I do imagine that if we are less concerned about the power and presence of women about the Club that the positive male energy of our activities will create even more inducement.

So we observe our Sesquicentennial on a strong, high note, we close out the twentieth century with a sense of keeping pace with our times and we enter the new millennium with a pledge to carry forward the good works of our forefathers earnestly, enthusiastically and in our tradition of having a jolly good time.

John A. MacLeod, M.D.

ASTONISHING

November 1, 1999

John H. Wilson, III

Holy Mary, Mother of God.

Pray for us.

Saint John the Baptist

Pray for us.

Saint Joseph.

Pray for us.

Saint Peter and Paul.

Pray for us.

The liturgy then directs that one can add any saints of particular devotion, but I'm not sure they were ready for me.

My wife and I were baptizing our youngest daughter and after fifteen years of marriage, and habitation and travel to a variety of places, we had a few ideas of our own. Our son, born in London, was baptized at Westminster Cathedral in a very grand and rather traditional ceremony at a hot tub sized grey marble font in its own chapel at the back of the church. Our first daughter was baptized during Mass - these days a rather trendy thing to do, at least for the clergy - we were encouraged and we agreed. But our youngest (we were optimistic that she would be our last, but we had been optimistic on that line before), she was the excuse for a stage-managed baptism. Our parish priest from Saint Stephen's in the East End was going to be away so we decided to have the baptism at the chapel at the Mercy Center in East Walnut Hills, where our children go to school at Mercy Montessori, and the children's chaplain, Father James Shappelle, would do the work. In fact, the baptism was still rather ordinary, except for Father Shappelle's always inspired and relevant words to the children assembled, brothers and sisters of classmates of our children, and for the litany of saints, which got somewhat out of hand.

We dove right in.

Saint Stephen. The Patron of our parish, where by all rights we should have been.

Pray for us.

Saint John. My saint's name and that of our son and my father.

Pray for us.

Saint Anne and Saint Suzanna. In the absence of Saint Annasue, my wife's name, we had to double up on this one.

Pray for us.

"Maybe you'd like to explain the significance of some of these choices," Father Shappelle said politely but firmly, perhaps sensing that we might be taking some indulgence with the process here. So explain we did.

Saint Sophia. My daughter's saint's name (her first name's actually Anna, but we decided not to be redundant). Likewise, I know Saint Sophia and her daughters Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity, all martyrs, are all certainly apocryphal, but there is still that great church in Istanbul (not connected to this saint in any way, sniffs Butler, in his Lives of the Saints), and the church obviously had a direct line at some point before the Saracens appropriated it.

In any case, we all asked Saint Sophia to pray for us.

Saint Veronica. Our new daughter. I was not impressed by recent research that this saint and her legend of Christ's face imprinted on her veil during the Passion are likely to be inventions of the early Christmas. Her name comes from the Latin "Vero," true, and "icon," image.

Pray for us.

Saint Teresa of Avila. Veronica's middle name, spelled with no "h."

Pray for us.

Saint Theresa of Liseux (spelled with an "h"). Why not cover all bases?

Pray for us.

Saint Mary. My mother's name, and although we had already invoked the Virgin, there is no shortage of saints named Mary, as you can imagine.

Pray for us.

Saint Florence. One of her middle names.

Pray for us.

Saint Bridget. Her other middle name.

Pray for us.

Saint Catherine. My sister's name saint. My sister is not quite as into this as my wife and I. She went off to Oxford to study theology and deduced that God was an Anglican, which merely put her into my mother's prayers even more often than she already was.

Pray for us.

Saint James. My brother, a skeptic.

Pray for us.

Despite the devotion of the Irish I was unable to find a Saint Ryan, to go with his middle name.

Saint Christopher. My youngest brother. He likewise is unimpressed with recent research about the documented existence of early saints.

Pray for us.

Saint Michael. His middle name.

Pray for us.

Saint Thomas. His other middle name. Fortunately he has two unimpeachable saints to back up Christopher.

Pray for us.

When drawing this up I was at something of a loss. My Baptist parents-in-law were being left out, but what

could I do? It was impossible to find a Saint Earl and despite there being two Saint Ethelberts, three Ethelburgas, one Etheldreda, one Ethelnoth, two Ethelwalds, and one Ethylwold, I could not find Saint Ethlyn. I am embarrassed to say that I should have simply included them by way of the saints from their birthdays, which is what I did to everyone else, and here we began to get wonderfully obscure.

Saint Simeon, whose feast is on my birthday.

Pray for us.

Saint Martina, whose feast is on my wife's birthday.

Pray for us.

Saint Helier, feast on our son's birthday. Saint Helier has a particular resonance. Sophie's godfather hails from the Channel Island of Jersey, and some of you world travelers know that Saint Helier is the capital of the island. When we were looking for saints whose feasts were around our son's due date, before he was born, we were pleased by this connection, but Sophie's future godfather, a homosexual Catholic, was even more interested in the discovery of one legend that said that Helier, who lived in a cave on a rock off the coast of the island, was not alone, and had a young companion with him. "They don't tell you that at the tourist authority," he said.

We implored Saint Helier to pray for us.

Saint Marciana, whose feast day is on our eldest daughter's birthday. It seemed somehow inappropriate, on this day when we were sanctifying a successful consummation of our marriage, to invoke Saints Julian and Basilissa, who share this feast with Saint Marciana, since, as Butler relates, "though engaged in the married state, lived by mutual consent in perpetual chastity." Saint Marciana, on the other hand, appears to be listed in the calendar of saints as a result of her good fortune at the hands of gladiators. God's miraculous preservation of her even led to the conversion of one of

them. She was obviously the early Christian equivalent of a relief pitcher who comes in only to get one out; "at length," Butler writes, "she was torn in pieces by a wild bull and leopard."

George Rieveschl shares this birthday, and with his own devotion to scholarship he might have more of an affinity to the 17th century Blessed Alix le Clercq, who spent her life founding schools.

Saint Marciana. Pray for us.

Saints Philemon and Apollonius, feast on Veronica's birthday. Apollonius was merely a martyred Christian deacon from the 4th century, but Philemon was a popular musician and entertainer, which may go some way to explaining why Veronica has spent most of her days singing and dancing through the house. I'm at something of a loss to explain why she likes to do it with no clothes on.

We asked Philemon and Apollonius to pray for us.

Saint Francis of Assisi, whose feast is on my father's birthday. I thought I heard an audible sign of relief from Father Shappelle at the mention of a saint as well known as Francis.

Pray for us.

Saint Pancras, feast on my mother's birthday. Another sign, of a different sort, from Father Shappelle. No doubt it was because this was the more obscure Sicilian Saint Pancras and not the Roman one, who has the Greek Revival church dedicated to him in London.

Pray for us.

It was April 20, so I felt no hesitation in invoking the Saint-du-jour, so to speak, Saint Agnes of Montepulciano, particularly since we sampled a memorable bottle of VINO Nobile de Montepulciano on site several years earlier. Likewise, we invoked San Jacinto, not only because the following day, April 21st, is known as San Jacinto Day in my home state of Texas, named after the battle that secured Texas independence, but also

because the principal of Mercy Montessori is Sister Jacinta. It is always nice to butter up the head nun. However, the battle was named that because it was fought on the San Jacinto River, not because the victory occurred on the day of the saint's feast, but nevertheless the saint preserved us. The feast of the 17th century Saint Hyacintha (or Jacinta) falls on my wife's birthday.

Pray for us, we all responded.

Finally we came to the end. Father Shappelle had seen nothing like this parade but I saved the best for last.

Saint Christina the Astonishing.

Dead silence. A few surprised laughs. My immediate family made the appropriate response. Father Shappelle had heard far too many face-to-face confessions to display any outward emotion apart from patience, but I knew he was thinking he was dealing with a Catholic with a screw loose. The ceremony proceeded and Veronica emerged baptized. But two inevitable questions arose immediately afterward: the more general one being why this weird attention to saints? The more specific question was Saint Christina who?

First things first. During our wait for our first child's birth, we paged through the two weeks either side of our son's July 11 due date in Butler's Lives of the Saints, checking out, not least for sake of amusement, what name we might give him. This was not a serious exercise; he is John Human Wilson, IV, and my grandfather, who named my father John Human Wilson, II (after his father's friend and benefactor, John Human), was still alive. We were not about to end that string. But while today he all but rolls up in the fetal position at the thought of it, we took great mirth in thinking that we might call him Carilefus, Drostan, Hermagoras, Pambo, or Wandregisilis, although he seems these days not to be so upset by the possibility of having been called Goar.

July 24 lists 11 feasts, and there in the middle, as unassuming as could be, sat the early Flemish "Saint Christina the Astonishing." The one word description of her after her name is "Virgin," and after reading her biography the only response I could make was "no kidding." It is worth citing some of Butler's commentary on Christina's life.

"Christina was born at Brusthem in the diocese of Liège, in 1150, and at the age of 15 was left an orphan, with two elder sisters. They belonged to the peasant class. When she was about 22 Christina had a seizure, which was probably a cataleptic fit, was assumed to be dead, and in due course was carried in an open coffin to the church where a Mass of requiem was begun. Suddenly, after the Agnus Dei, Christina sat up, soared to the beams of the roof, 'like a bird,' as her biographer says, and there perched herself. Everyone fled from the church except her elder sister, who, though thoroughly frightened, gave a good example of recollection to the others by stopping till the end of Mass, immobilis perseverans. The priest then made Christina come down (it was said that she had taken refuge up there because she could not bear the smell of sinful human bodies), and she averred that she had been actually dead; that she had gone down to Hell and there recognized many friends, and to Purgatory where she had seen more friends, and then to Heaven; that she had been offered the choice of stopping there or returning to earth and liberating by her prayers and sufferings those whom she had seen in Purgatory; that she had elected to return, and within the space of the threefold Agnus Dei her soul had been restored to her body.

"This was only the beginning of a series of hardly less incredible occurrences. Christina fled into remote places, climbed trees and towers and rocks, and crawled into ovens, to escape from the smell of humans. She would handle fire with impunity and, in the coldest weather, dash into the river, or into a mill-race and be carried unharmed under the wheel. She prayed balancing herself on the top of a hurdle or curled up on the ground in such a way that she looked like a ball. Not unnaturally, everyone thought she was made or 'full of devils,' and attempts were made to confine her, but she always broke loose. Eventually she was caught by a man

who had to give her a violent blow on the leg to do it, and it was thought her leg was broken. She was therefore taken to the house of a surgeon in Liège, who put splints on the limb and chained her to a pillar for safety. She escaped in the night. On one occasion when a priest, not knowing her and frightened by her appearance, had refused to give her communion, she rushed wildly through the streets, jumped into the Meuse, and swam away. She lived by begging, dressed in rags, and in many ways behaved in a very terrifying manner. There is even a faint hint of relief in her biographer when he says that, when she had climbed into the font at Wellen and sat down in the baptismal water, 'after that her way of living was more conformed to that of men, she was quieter, and better able to bear the smell of human beings.'

We took great pleasure in passing this life of Christina around with the brandy at dinner parties, it was unanimously thought a real hoot. While my lapsed Catholic skeptic brother read the passage one eyebrow rose higher and higher into his forehead. When he finished he took a long drag from a cigarette, looked at us very seriously, and remarked, "you believe this stuff?"

Do I believe this stuff? My brother's question, delivered with the timing of a classic straight man, and which kept us all laughing, has stayed with me, as should the comments of a good skeptic. Within the last five years or so I began to wonder what there was of Saint Christina, if there were any tangible relics, remains, monuments, whatever. In the process of looking I began to ponder on sainthood in general and on the representation of sanctity; as Catholics we hold saints in high veneration, they are examples to which we aspire, and Butler's Lives of the Saints outlines the holy lives of these men and women so that we can see that they were indeed flesh and blood (although his own skepticism at apocryphal legends is not hidden).

We Catholics love a good show. Perhaps it comes from the public performance of the Passion of Christ (the artist Chris Burden, who publicly shot himself as art, had nothing on the public nature of Jesus' last couple of days and its place in western art), or perhaps it comes from our history as starring roles in Roman tournaments,

but the smells and bells of a High Mass that goes with a sung liturgy (preferably Mozart, although Gounod is not bad) are living theater at its best. The lives of saints provide all the classic conflicts of great theater, good versus evil, say. The first martyr, Saint Stephen, was stoned to death on the direction of the man who later became Saint Paul. We have in that story good works, a threatened political hierarchy seeing a threat to power, violent suppression, and redemption, and then the story begins again, in Stephen's case with Saint Paul. A visit to any Catholic church in a Latin country, and even some in Anglo-Saxon countries, presents the visitor with a tableaux of blood in the imagery of devotion, something not particularly surprising considering the role of blood in Christianity, and the fact we should remember that Jesus is believed to be all God and all man, not half of both. The story begins with a birth (I've witnessed three myself; they're a bloody mess), it continues with mass infanticide by Herod, and culminates in a dinner where the main character tells his followers to eat his flesh and drink his blood, ending with a violent death with blood dripping and finally spewing, mixed with water out of a gash in his side. Hollywood should be inspired. When one takes these events to their logical ends it is not a pretty sight in one's mind's eye, but the Latins at least get the point across that the man Jesus suffered quite a lot as he died for humanity, that humanity would not suffer and be with the God Jesus in the afterlife. The bodily fluids involved in Christianity and the legends around them have made me wonder about a work of art like Andres Serrano's Piss Christ, the notorious photograph of a crucifix suspended in what the artist has maintained is a plexiglas container of his own urine. It would not surprise me if it was Kroger seltzer water photographed with a yellow filter. Without any context that image is almost calculatngly beautiful, a crucifix in a mystical haze, and Serrano, born a Catholic but someone who is dealing with that background perhaps with greater angst than most of us born Catholic, looks at the unholy mess that is part of the divine sacrifice.

Andrew Hudgens, a celebrated poet and professor of literature at the University of Cincinnati, wrote a poem about Piss Christ, soon to be published in the on-line magazine, Slate, in which he captures exactly what I believe to be the essence of this work of art. Hudgens

has written eloquently about art before, he's born a Baptist but with a Catholic wife, and certainly a Catholic sensibility, and understands the role of theater, agony, suffering, redemption, and the great paradox of this beautiful work of art that offends only when we understand the artist's intent.

Piss Christ Andres Serrano 1987

If we did not know it was cow's blood and urine,
 if we did not know Serrano had for months
 hoarded his urine in a plastic vat,
 if we did not know the cross was gimcrack plastic,
 we would assume it was, if anything,
 too beautiful. We would assume it was
 the resurrection, glory, Christ transformed
 to light, by light above and outside him
 because the unholy cocktail of blood and urine
 burns like a halo, the god-light enveloping him,
 and light, as always, light makes it beautiful.
 We are born between the urine and the feces,
 Augustine says, and so was Christ, if there was a
 Christ.

skidding into this world as we do
 on a tide of blood and urine. Blood, feces, urine
 - what the fallen world is made of, and what we
 make.

He peed, ejaculated, shat, wept, bled -
 bled under Pontius Pilate, and I assume
 the criminal god, the mutilated god,
 the humiliated god voided himself
 on the cross and the blood and urine smeared his
 legs

and he ascended bodily unto heaven,
 and on the third day he rose into glory, which
 is what we see here, the Piss Christ is glowing
 blood;

the whole irreducible point of the faith,
 God thrown in human waste, submerged and shining.
 We have grown used to beauty without horror.
 We have grown used to useless beauty.

As I said, this photograph only offends when we
 understand the artist's materials and the context. The
 current poster child for blasphemy is similar, Chris
 Ofili's The Holy Virgin Mary, currently on display at the

Brooklyn Museum of Art, which really only offends when one reads what it was made of. No one ever gets past that to understand how this Anglo-Nigerian Catholic artist uses materials to span the two cultures of which he is a part. In African countries, the Madonna and child are often black; in African tribal art, elephant dung is often used as a sign of reverence, in the tribal culture we call the international art world, the expressionism of paper collage, oil paint, glitter, polyester resin, map pins, and non-traditional media (to use a current euphemism for elephant dung) are revered as well. Ofili applied little cut-outs of what might be read as testicles and infant penises; how many images of the Virgin and her child have you seen with these genitals visible? Rubens conformed to his own age's styles and standards, and those who were paying his expenses. Ofili conforms to our age's styles, and, with church patronism all but non-existent, he likewise conforms to the standards of those who pay his expenses, that international art world. Art is not made purely to please us, the best art makes us think about ourselves, our culture, and about other grand issues. "We have grown used to beauty without horror. We have grown used to useless beauty."

But here they are. Two alarming Catholic images at the fin-de-siecle that if one gets over the materials can make us ponder our beliefs and our reverence; in the same way that Caravaggio's Death of the Virgin makes us ponder similar issues despite the known fact that he used a dead prostitute pulled from the Tiber as the model for "the holy Virgin Mary." The Giulianis of Caravaggio's era had similar conniptions, but The Death of the Virgin is one of the most moving of 17th century religious painting. But Piss Christ and The Holy Virgin Mary are currently how religion manifests itself in art; the art of our time - religious or otherwise - reflects the doubts we have in this cynical, superficial age. Really, considering the state of our culture, how could it do otherwise? Personally, I find it reassuring that I am not the only one who has to be constantly reassured that I should entrust my eternity and immortality to an itinerant preacher from 2000 years ago who claimed to be the son of God, who asked his followers to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and then claimed to have risen from the dead. The itinerant preachers I come across these days (albeit

usually on television) have little credibility and they don't claim half of what I just stated. The art of our time, especially when it is religious and offends public officials (as well as the Catholic League, who haven't done their research either), presents that "good show" I mentioned earlier but perhaps not quite the same as blood being spilled in the course of a good traditional martyrdom.

But the good shows from the lives of the saints holds one's interest as all good narratives do. For every Saint Luigi Gonzaga, who led an exemplary (although short) life - don't be such a San Luigi, the Italians say to someone who's just too good - there are many others, Augustine is only the most well known example, who struggled with their faith, for reasons of temptation or for reasons of torture. The ones who struggle against temptation are more relevant to my personal life, but I love the ones who were tortured, I relish reading about their trials (better than me, perhaps I think subconsciously) and I relish reading about their imaginative deaths. Perhaps this comes from my art background; who could not be curious about the fate of Saints Lucy and Agatha, who are often portrayed laconically offering their fates on plates like waitresses, Lucy with her eyes staring at you, like the two remaining canapés at the Queen City Club last week, or worse, Agatha, who offers two rounded crème caramels, signifying her involuntary mastectomy for Jesus.

The 12th century Saint Christina had left a mark on my life. I needed to know if that unbelievable life left any mark on the Low Countries. A trip to Maastricht last March, on the occasion of the annual International Fine Art and Antique Fair, provided the perfect opportunity. The usual pre-trip research helped me get over the fact that in Butler's life of Christina he writes of these locations in French, but once outside Brussels in these post-colonial days, French is an obstacle. I first thought that I would simply drive to her birthplace, Brusthem, but finding Brusthem proved to be something of a challenge. Of course I knew it was in the diocese of Liège (or Luik, these days) but I thought I was truly in trouble when even my 1910 Baedeker of Belgium and Holland failed me. Fortunately, it was only a temporary setback, as there is a mention of it in a 1924 Blue Guide,

Muirhead's Belgium, "memorable" it says, "for a victory of Charles the Bold over the insurgents of Liège in 1467" (typically, written by an Anglican, with no interest in obscure local saints). Brusthem is today a suburb of Saint-Trond, better known to locals as Sint-Truiden, and my wife and I set off from Brussels, crawling around the variously-named road that is the boulevard peripherique at 9:30 in the morning, speeding up as we entered the E40 and drove out past the airport. A stop at a motorway rest area got us a Michelin map of Belgium, but none of the luxuries of life we were used to from Italian truck stops, but the Michelin map made life a lot easier, with Brusthem (or Brustem - no "h") in plain view. We exited at Berloz, drove the 10 kilometers or so north and entered the town. This is one depressing little place and I was tempted to curl up in a ball during my stay too. One passes a little ersatz half-timbered pub on the main road, next to the sign pointing the road into the town center, and with that almost all charm of Brusthem ends. Endless little beige pre-fabricated strip malls selling auto parts and maternity clothes line the roads, punctuated by pre-fabricated semi-detached houses and the occasional gas station, all, no doubt, erected in the spirit of being as up-to-date as the Americans (they have a long way to go to beat the Japanese on that count). I had trouble even spotting a bar - and this was Belgium; the town was empty of people. We found the church, surrounded by a new stone fence and a gravel parking lot, the churchyard paved, and with the modern tombstones all carrying unflattering photographs of the deceased. It was an old structure, post-Christina by a couple of hundred years, but clad in the sensible stucco of the 19th century, but very definitely locked. No note to say "call the priest" as in England; no note to say "call the little old lady with the key who lives above the bar" as in Italy. On a hillock to the west of the church, across a still dew-covered field and accessible through a stile and up a path was the ruins of a castle keep, not noted in the Blue Guide, and certainly a very picturesque sight. But again, post-Christina. But the most amazing thing (or perhaps I should say, the most astonishing thing), was that the church was called Sint-Jans, or something of the sort. I've forgotten what it was called, but I was flabbergasted to discover that it was not named after a saint born only steps away. No doubt that was the site of the church, even if not the actual

building, where she "soared to the beams of the roof, 'like a bird,'" the first of her astonishing acts.

With no luck at the birthplace of Saint Christina we moved on to where she spent the last years of her life, Saint-Trond, or again, Sint-Truiden in the Flemish, the words Saint Trond nowhere in sight. The town surrounds an attractive Grote Markt, itself ringed with little buildings with stepped gables, the 18th century city hall attached to a bell tower of 1606. Essentially, nothing survives from before the 13th century, when Christina moved to the abbey of Saint Catherine, the abbey itself has nothing older than 1655. We walked into the church of our lady (still no Sint-Christina kirk, but who can argue with the church named after the holy virgin Mary); the town is named after the Frankish Saint Trudo who founded the abbey in 655 on the land of his own estate. Indeed, there is no Sint-Christina-kirk anywhere in the city. We entered what is a lovely small church, 15th century, with delicate piers and pointed arches, and after walking around for a bit, our eyes adjusting to the light, we scoured the statuary and altarpieces in the chapels. We finally spotted perhaps the only document of this saint whom no one wants, a small plaque on the wall, about 10 or 12 feet up, in Latin, on which I spotted what I thought was a Latinization of Christina's name. Was this it? My Latin is not so great and I still have no idea for sure, but it appeared to be a small memorial to Christina. As we walked around the church a little longer, our stomachs calling us to one of the restaurants ringing the Grote Markt, we strolled out the way we came. Over one of the closed doors was a bad, modern, painting celebrating Christina of Liege, as she levitated, looking heavenwards, with thin rays of light emanating from her. Its style: 1970s surrealist. It was awful, give me Serrano any day. The painting did not inspire, it did not challenge (well all right, it did challenge, but only my faith in European art schools), and it only moved me to laughter, and to have lunch. I emerged from the church amused, and happily anticipating my Belgian french fries with mayonnaise.

Perhaps the cathedral at Luik (Liège, to us) has some greater monument to Christina, perhaps the relic of the pillar where she was unsuccessfully chained for safety. Perhaps the font into which she climbed, moved

there must be some inner imperative at work. . . probably no more complicated than, for me, this is an intensely satisfying kind of mental and word "play"... and that this forum provides a captive, and unusually congenial audience. This imperative has been heightened since I retired from P&G two and a half years ago. I now can read, all the way through, the daily and Sunday New York Times, The Economist and the many other publications that, previously, owing to time constraints, I might only have skimmed. The result is an ever growing pile of clips and snips - representing vast amounts of foolishness - awaiting, demanding, virtually pleading for critique, interpretation, deconstruction and other deformations of thought.

Further, I note what appears to be almost an extinction of light verse in most publications. . . even in The New Yorker, which for many years gave voice to this fragile poetic form. Clearly, I had no choice but to soldier on, to witness for cleverness, improbable rhymes, juicy puns and "smartass" observations, and to pursue yet another round of Clips and Snips, Part 4, Rhymes for Our Times.

January 14, 1999 - The New York Times

(A quote in an article on the economic turmoil in Brazil)

"MARKETS HAVE A FUNNY WAY OF REACTING
TO REALITY ONCE THEY THINK IT THROUGH"

A market that can "think it through"!
I've never met one. . .think. . .have you?
A market can at times be funny.
I've seen one laugh - then eat my money!
If markets really think at all
They know two things; to rise. . .then fall!

A "Warning Statement" included in the product instructions of a new electric iron

inspire better than facts and truths. Is it a Catholic thing? I don't know. Do I believe this stuff? My Papist interest in graven images perhaps comes from my own interest in things and people, relics and reliquaries, portraits and biography. A relic is a tangible part of this holy person, just as in my line of work a brushmark is a tangible relic of the artist. It is a direct link to the past and it brings a charge of life, and it is these links in life, the six degrees of separation between that being which created me, and me, that link does not make me believe, but it eases passage on the journey.

But as a somewhat traditional scholar I need more than simply the object itself to explain all. While some would accuse me of being a hetero-patriarchalist I like to work from original sources, from documents and objects that speak clearly of some evidence. That is why Butler's last paragraph on Christina, where he cites two reliable contemporary accounts of this extraordinary and enjoyable figure, means a lot to me as a thinking person dealing with an astonishing life.

"Do you believe this stuff?"

CLIPS AND SNIPS IV - RHYMES FOR OUR TIMES

November 8, 1999

Norman A. Levy

The clips and snips referred to in this title, are mostly headlines from newspapers and magazines - extended, improbably, into light verse, and used as a thinly disguised platform for excursions into social commentary.

I've written such verses, for my own amusement, on and off, all of my adult life. . .and for this club for my last three times "at bat". While I have also presented to you over the years, verse in more "serious" poetic forms, on "weightier" subjects, I have always returned to clipping and snipping. Clearly,