

“Eve of St. Agnes in the High School Gym”

The saint's been dead too long;
no young girl keeps her vigil. Not one fasts
or prays tonight, for a vision
of the one she'll marry.

A band plays—too loudly—
popular tunes a few years out-of date.
Young men emerge from a huddle
of teammates, cheerleaders,
fans. They run onto the court,
howling, slapping hands.

Men just a few years older
stand smoking by the door;
their windbreakers advertise a local bar.
Others sit in the stands,
holding sleepy children;
the women with them look worried and tired.

Snow falls silently,
snaking through the streets,
while in the gym, done up like spring
in a pale yellow skirt
and lavender sweater,
a pretty girl sleepwalks
on high heels. She carries herself
to a boy on the bench
who doesn't look up; and old men sigh.

When the game is over
they flee on the storm.
The saint sits in heaven,
and if anyone's praying
on this chilly night,
let it be for love.