

Verna George

IN HEROES' CIRCLE



Gaunt saints laid out on slabs, they sleep
in the nine o'clock sun. The benches
are coffin-narrow, made to keep
the homeless flock away. The stench
of loneliness ascends from their heap
of cast-offs -- styrofoam-boxed lunches,
cardboard sheets, cane trash, relics of hope:
a battered bag, dead coals, an empty cup.

I avert my eyes
from the sun-struck show of shame
as they rise like the dead and stretch
and turn as if at home
in the warmth of a love multiplied
by intimates in a private room,
or our new Jerusalem.