

**THE DEATH OF MONICA**

*(An Epitome of Chapter 12, Book 9, of 'The Confessions')*

JOHN SEARLE

When Monica, Augustine's mother died,  
Great was his grief, yet he held down the tide  
Of climbing sorrow and allowed no trace  
Of tears to fret the stillness of his face.  
Taking the Psalter, he began to sing  
With all the household; then with comforting  
Words he declared how Christ's ascension gave  
The proof of blessed life beyond the grave;  
And all the brethren listened, and some thought  
'What faith! to him his mother's death is naught'.  
But ah! what inner storms Augustine knew,  
Fingers of fire his heart clutched and he grew  
Rigid with pain, though not a soul could see  
A sign of grief, that hidden agony.  
And then another cause of anguish came:  
Augustine's loyal spirit winced with shame  
To think that he, priest consecrate who wore  
God's livery, and preached his heavenly lore,  
This tyranny of human love should know,  
Should let this dear affection overthrow  
His dedicated life . . .

So dragged along  
One after one the torturing minutes' throng:  
No respite came, no peaceful pause allayed  
The working fire, although he prayed and prayed,  
Night fell, and lying down attempting sleep,  
Then, only then, the saint began to weep.