

## Donna Freitas, she hears voices

Jeannette Cooperman | Oct. 24, 2008



Donna Freitas

Donna Freitas is an assistant professor of religion at Boston University, earned a solemn doctorate in religious studies from the Catholic University of America and wrote a dark tome, *Killing the Imposter God*. Then she started researching *Sex and the Soul Possibilities of Sainthood* even has its own trailer on [youtube.com](http://youtube.com).

### Sounds like the book practically wrote itself.

I teach about the medieval women mystics, and now I joke that I hear voices

too.

### Any idea why this story seized you?

My mother had died suddenly, and I was spending a lot of time thinking about what she had left me. Like cooking -- I was conscripted into the kitchen as a kid. And she and my grandmother prayed to the saints all the time; we had statues all over the place.

### Antonia thinks she's the only girl in high school who's never been kissed. What was *your* first kiss like?

Er ... I was a late bloomer like my protagonist. But I ended up having a pretty wonderful kiss.



Well ...?

I'm not kissing and telling. When I wrote the kissing parts in the book, I was beet red and had one hand over my eyes. I couldn't believe I was writing a kissing scene. But I finally realized she was *going* to have her first kiss, and I was going to have to write it.

**So how autobiographical is the novel?**

I, too, used to see the Communion line as a parade of potential boyfriends. But being a saint, that never crossed my mind.

**Who was your favorite saint?**

The Italian favorite, St. Anthony, finder of lost things. We talked to him all the time in my house. Put on a pot of tea, call on St. Anthony, because Grandma's lost her purse and we've got to go.

**Antonia comes up with a few suggestions, like a patron saint of secrets. Are you sure there isn't one already?**

I checked. There is, however, a patron saint of spelunking, and I learned all about St. Expeditus, patron saint of hurrying things up.

**You relished this subject, didn't you?**

In some ways, the saints are wonderfully kitschy, comedy-in-waiting. I don't mean that disrespectfully. People focus, and for good reason, on the darker side of Catholicism, but there's this wonderful lighthearted side that's filled with life.

**What difference do you think the saints make?**

Oh, it gives you a place to go with your little needs -- actually not always *little* needs, but those daily things you worry about. One of the things that's so hilarious is how specific they are; you literally have this *army* of men and women you can turn to. If you're having trouble in gym class, St. Sebastian's your man -- who else is going to care?

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