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Contemplating Teresa of Avila

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Dawn Diez Willis

CONTEMPLATING TERESA OF AVILA

one

learning *agape*
you wonder
will the change
be worth it
your feet tap
against the edges
of shadow—
you are deciding
& the deciding
bruises
comfort has been
such a comfort
that you resist
its loss

two

you analyze
whatever happens
its effect
on what's
inside: is
there any God
any spirit:
does the *flutter*
mean something

three

is it proof you're
looking for: an
exhalation of sound
your soul, the permeable

formless stuff
you know
but can't evidence

four
you shear your hair
that old gesture
of grief & reverence

thinking your naked skull
must please God
but unsure why

five
and you think too
about the saint
who is somehow
past the human
you wonder like teresa
what to do with that
perfection—her
bony, metaphorical
hands passing
through you to pluck
out doubt
in a dream
without comment
trembling, skinless:
each object inside you
unsealed
until you receive
an image of yourself
flawed, malformed
but accurate

six

the whole project
scares you, the whole
idea of intimacy
with anyone
let alone a saint
let alone someone
who has pushed
past her own
moral inertia
let alone yourself
your shadow
glorified, singular
isn't finished

seven

damage
the "without"
that gives you
your edges, your
share of the cost
shadow meekly attached
but there—yes
a saint is someone
who has pushed past
her own stasis
& won a foothold:
there is a love
different from yours
with hands
head & feet
it doesn't need
to be seen: rooted
fluttering, proofless
moving out
into the world
with whatever it has