

*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