

Saint Theresa and the Lepress

Kathryn Kimball

Few teeth remain in her mouth,
And the mouth exhales rottenness.
I turn my back, my nose.
Still she presses in.

This dandruff-dotted coat
Wants my place in line.
Her neediness brushes my hem,
But virtue does not leave.

Theresa lays her groceries upon the counter.
As the lepress presses in upon her
For a touch (that is what she wants—
She needs no food or drink from the market)
When the lepress meets the holy woman,
They, who are never touched
Except by vermin that crawl upon the bed,
Embrace, kiss, together hold each other,
And into the shriven ear, whisper secrets.