

SEVERE SWEETNESS

St Theresa of Avila, Bernini

The woman is not perfected, she moans.
She has travelled so far, her body erupts.

The sculpted stone — a moment
where time splits the force of duration,

opens the woman to mortal excess.
Light falls, deified, in carnal folds —

fold after fold in rhythmic waves,
climaxing in her abandoned face —

heavy-lidded eyes, aquiline nose,
her tender-lipped mouth forms

the whispered supplication,
pleasurable pain, the holy hurts

of her spirit's *yes...yes...*
The angel's forearm is all vulnerability,

the delicacy of his hand unsayable.
He lifts her robes - the numinous measure

of diffuse desire, erotic control. At the iron tip
of his great golden spear, a point of fire.

Speechless, stiff-spined,
staring at the image on a computer screen

in an office full of office things,
I, the communicant,

head on the desk,
long for the spirit's ravish of stone.