

## Parallel

By Sarah Law

*For Thomas Merton and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*

Imagine had the junctions slipped:  
the waves of 1890s flu averted,  
and a young nun made to accept

an extra blanket, responsible doctors  
helping the soul settle into its skin.  
Imagine her life unfolding, instead of

her cult; imagine her living through wars,  
and writing, as the Carmel's Prioress,  
the story of her soul. Merton, perhaps,

writing in turn to her; the two friends  
plaiting together spark and wisdom,  
taking on joint firewatch of the world.

And in this cosmos, my converted father,  
with his wife and baby daughter  
visiting Lisieux for her blessing;

imagine her frail frame – ninety-four,  
at the far edge of the body, offering  
love as dry and light as a leaf,

(slipping her hand through the gaps in the grille)  
and softly tapping a weeks' old infant  
fresh from creation, smelling of petals

and blood, and sensing hard-won heaven,  
as my cloudy eyes look upwards,  
meeting her own.

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**Sarah Law** lives in London, UK, and is a tutor for the Open University and elsewhere. She has published five books of poetry, and academic papers including the chapter “Thomas Merton: Poetry and Prayer” in Knox and Took, eds., *Poetry and Prayer: The Power of the Word II* (Routledge, 2015). This poem is part of a future collection entitled *Thérèse*. Other poems from the collection have appeared or are forthcoming in *Psaltery & Lyre*, *The Windhover*, *Saint Katherine Review* and elsewhere.



**Sarah Law**