

CHRISTINA THE ASTONISHING

returned from the dead
to save the poor souls she'd seen
in Purgatory.

It is said she
hid in ovens, climbed trees,
flew up like a bird
to the rafters of a church
to escape the intolerable smell
of human beings.

Seven centuries on
I, no saint, have climbed trees,
hid in the rafters of barns,
camped in my study,
my kitchen, my church, seeking
separation more than solitude.

Now growing old,
I long for those I've shunned,
Seek their touch and, yes, their smell,
lest I too go to the dead
and not know the scent of Your pungent
earth, and those made from its clay
in Your image.