

This we return to

I have not visited the cunning folk
for herbs and potions, paid in kind,
nor made salve of celandine and moss,
nor put a bag of stones at the crossroads
to charm away warts onto strangers,
yet I have rubbed dock leaf onto smarting skin.

I have not thought to find the cool garden
under a full moon to turn my coins over,
nor slept hungry on St Agnes Eve
with pins in my sleeve to find a lover,
nor fed the Trevi fountain to keep him,
but I touched wood for fear of losing you.

I have no relics or icons,
not crawled on knees to Fatima or Lourdes,
nor chanted Aves and creeds by your sick bed
but the night of blue flashing light, sirens,
you, so small and frail stretchered in,
I sought the chapel, its echo of incantations.

All day I had held you as you fought for life,
helpless heart spooling ancient spells,
brain seeking modern salves.
Overwhelmed by the imps of fear,
ruled by indifferent stars shadows
are all the comfort we ever had.