

A Pilgrim Visits Saint Werburgh's Tomb

You sing on the way, keep the beat with rattle and drum
until the majesty of the cathedral overcomes you.

Unable to see Life's troubles except as a reward for sin,
your guilt lies heavy as you walk the last long mile
barefoot.

Penitent with bloodied feet you kneel at Werburgh's tomb
and touch the stone, trace the carvings.

Child of savage and saint, her body a talisman
against pestilence and woe, she lies in her
place of grace to receive you.

The boundary between us is time.

We know more and believe less.

Yet when it comes to the ultimate truth
we clutch at our certainties with as much fervour
and as little reason as you grasp that relic
in your trembling hand.

Sue Parkinson

(inspired by the Pilgrim's Rattle in the Grosvenor Museum collection)