

Sparks of the Everyday edited by Anthony Anaxagorou and Paul Linehan, Poetry Ireland, 2022

Pilgrimage to Knock

Ireland 1968

by Helen Fallon

Sheep sheared, hay saved, we head west.
Our Ford Cortina rattles round each bend,
a haze of pipe smoke wafts around the car.
“It’s joyful today,” Ma says and digs
her rosary beads from her green suede bag.
Engine purr, prayer murmur, dogs yelp
at farmyard gates, as the unfamiliar car chugs on.
Finally the place of apparition appears.

Outside the chapel yard, an Ali Baba’s cave of stalls –
miraculous medals, brown and green scapulars,
blue plastic holy water fonts. We buy
ten commandment bracelets, with charms that glitter
for a week and pink and white sticks of rock,
etched with *I prayed for you at Knock*.
Overhead flocks of crows, all black and flapping,
caw and circle everywhere.