

Our Maladies

Jean LeBlanc

The painful ones: bone shave, breakbone,
scumpox. The occupational hazards:
potter's asthma, grocer's itch, dock fever.
All the ways to get typhus: jail fever,
ship fever, boarding house remorse.
Tuberculosis of the spine, lymph glands,
kidneys. Bloody sweat, bloody stools,
bloody mouth. Canker, catarrh, chorea.
Blackened, flushed, jaundiced. Pray
for our hopeless selves, Saint Jude,
Saint Adelard, Saint Bernadette.
Pray, Saint Anthony, for our poor
animal bodies, our weak flesh,
our pox, our flux, our chilblains,
a hundred names for syphilis,
a thousand ways to cough.

