

Here are some of the submissions from our ninth Invite to  
Write inspired by the following works:



### Archaic Threshold

One archaic Torii,  
a sturdy, sacred sentinel,  
with vermilion legs rising  
from the sapphire sea,  
enticed my inexperienced,  
adventuring self  
to cross the water  
and explore Miyajima  
with its mountain forests  
and revealing vistas.

In a wooden motor boat,  
the small daughter  
of a young Japanese couple  
perched in front of me--  
mother and father leaning forward  
and their child,  
whose grave, earnest eyes  
gazed backward  
with a puzzled stare

at my white Western face.

With eager hope,  
I welcomed  
the child's innocent strangeness,  
as together we all  
bounced across  
the slightly choppy water  
toward the island  
and its towering gate.

Although I smiled at her  
with happy eyes,  
my foreignness evoked  
more fear than friendship.  
Her sudden and silent tears  
unsettled my bright disposition,  
pouring new, insistent questions  
into my own naïve being.

Bewildered, I tried to gather in  
the scattered fragments  
of my unmet, childlike hopes,  
even as our boat slipped past  
the thick legs of the tall Torii  
to come ashore on plain sand.

A steep funicular carried travelers  
into the rocky landscape atop the hill.  
There, clusters of Snow monkeys,  
oblivious to the human crowd,  
combed the brown, hairy heads,  
shoulders, and backs  
of their partners with

kindness and care.

During that day,  
that long ago day,  
the confluence of  
an aged threshold,  
one small girl, and  
gentle Snow monkeys,  
unlocked unexpected insights  
and created indelible interests  
that tug the constant current  
of my future from the past.

- Karen D. Benson

## DOORS: THEME AND VARIATIONS

- for Gisela, the daily music of my soul

*Doors permit access between interior spaces created for a variety of needs.  
Doors control, restrict, or prevent entry into buildings from the outside world  
for purposes of safety and climate as well as privacy.*

However:

in Bene Vagienna there is a wooden door  
set into a wall and sealed by glass, an objet d'art  
relished for its delicately executed wooden filigree  
bearing the words: O PARADISO  
This is the *Portico Desideri*. It is impossible  
for anyone to pass through.\*

In Florence for almost fifty years  
Ghiberti laboured to fashion the doors

of the Battistero di San Giovanni, their panels  
so sublime Michelangelo christened them  
the *Porte del Paradiso*. Nowadays the originals  
aren't there of course one does not put temptation  
in the way of the street's godless thieves.

In the middle of an inlet at the Itsukushima Shrine  
a massive gateless gateway, the *torii*, stands  
at the invisible threshold of the profane and the sacred.  
Who can be certain which side is which  
perhaps that's the way it's meant to be  
to keep us on our guard.

But here in the suburbs, things are different:

The front door of this house is no gateless gate,  
no sumptuous portal to Paradise, just  
a standard wooden door, monumentally nondescript.  
No threshold dragons guard this modest domestic asylum  
no drawbridge or moat, only the door and a bell  
and an outside world refusing to be shut out completely  
until that last time when the undertaker calls.

Why is the world so reluctant to remain outside?  
It leers in through windows, raps on doors,  
thumbs door chimes, encourages hawkers, peddlers  
of Bibles, encyclopaedias, funeral policies,  
raffle tickets; and it entices unabashed criminals  
to invade whatever tranquillity and solace  
we might savour indoors.

Gates and doors manifest a human need  
to draw the line between  
in and out

incarceration and liberation  
public and private  
theirs and mine  
access and exclusion  
faith or foibles

However:

a house I once lived in has just been  
demolished - there are no doors or windows  
to open or close now - and whatever profanities  
I may have left behind have been bulldozed,  
scraped up, and strewn on the doorless spaces  
of the refuse dump beneath a sky that is always wide open.

In the world's wildernesses  
rivers and mountains, caves and forests  
have no need of doors; they're entrancing  
without exits or entrances clearly marked;  
labyrinths have no doors: the way in  
and the way out are one and the same;  
and the grave has no exits; only the fire  
at the end of time and the possibilities of paradise.  
Who knows what portals we might pass through then?

- Tony Ulyatt

\*These lines draw on information to be found in *The Double Bond*, Carole Angier's biography of Primo Levi.

DOOR

The door that I have been knocking

It opened, it closed

I stood in the doorway  
New door, old door  
Putting my hand on the knob  
Pushing & kicking it open  
Doors to Life & death  
Doors to Knowledge  
Feeling so good

The lock changed on the door  
How good it felt to close the door  
Red door to the Summer Castle  
Mysterious door led me to Sophia  
Hospital doors moving Transformations

Door of my psyche  
I open & close  
Wind blowing shutting & opening the door  
I knocked on the door  
Sat in front of the door  
Looked from behind the door  
Opened the door of my heart  
To Love  
It opened even more doors  
Doors to Life !

- Lera Welch