

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