

A DREAM OF DOORS

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I'd like to take a tour of doors: scrolling wrought iron
in Paris, heavy brass in Italy, carved oak in the Carolinas.

I'd like to touch doorknobs: green medallions,
brass faded like good jeans. Coolness and click
of a lock sliding open, fingers wrap handle,

thumb depresses a metal tongue and presto! Open.
I'd like to feel myself on one side of things and then

the other. I'd like to hear the pentatonic scale
played back to me as I knock on a hundred doors.
I'd like to hear the wind pull a door shut,

ease a door open. I could unscrew hinges
and remove a door completely, feel the open mouth

of a house gape at my indiscretion. I'd like to stand
in the frame, waving goodbye as he rides his bike away,
a tiny bell wave back. I would do gravestone etchings

of dates, manufacturers, names engraved, birds flying
from nowhere to somewhere, and I'd paper my door

with the impressions of doors from Tippicanoe county
or string them across my porch like prayer flags.

I'd like to see my dog nosing the door open

to jump her face closer once more. Give me
a garland of red doors strung across a blue sky,

let birds fly through and paper planes; may a kite catch
and hang in the frame. Let the door swing wide and pour
a tumbler of milk onto a willow tree, its arms of hair

heavy with nourishment, my hand outstretched
to catch whatever may fall.

READING *MONET'S GARDEN*

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It's not the feathery willows or artichoke
roses or even the purple-green water-lilies
shaped like blood cells under a microscope

that interest me—it's the boat he made:
a place to see, to paint, to get away from
eight children and not one but two wives

(even if it wasn't legal until Camille died
from child-birth complications, having been
tenderly cared for by Alice—the other wife.)

Perhaps it's morning before the kids wake
or afternoon when Camille and Alice argue
over what to order: more poultry or fish.

Monet has already walked the garden twice.
Unsteady in his boat, he steps lightly toward
the bow, removes a satchel of peaches,

considers the blackness of leather boots
on brown wood and, in turn, deficiencies
in his handling of darker colors. In plein air

the golden eyes of irises follow him
as he passes slowly. The imperceptible
sway of water-wake blurs the points

of grasses and ferns. The granite-walled pond
makes duplicates of bamboo and weeping-
willows. To be surrounded by a mirror-garden,

to move through it, is to feel the vibration
of every bird landing on a limb or parting
pliant leaves. A frog makes widening

tree rings on the surface of the water. All
afternoon and the board he's sitting on
becomes harder, but his seeing softens.

Beyond the geometry of a Japanese bridge,
two bodies reach for each other, touch,
and fade into loose patches of dark turquoise.

I see something of what he saw: the impossibility
of division, of separating red shawl and woman,
Things that Bend

~*AFTER DORLIANNE LAUX'S "WHAT'S BROKEN"*

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The inch worm in the window sill, curling
In a bank of light. Snow-soaked porch steps,

Old pinewood floors. The neck, the back—
My body bends into another body. Firelight

Bends around his shoulders, a half-moon
Around stars, around the tops of trees.

We are both the driver on dark highways
Breaking for bends in the road, and the river

Rushing over rocks toward the bend ahead.
What bends short, bends long—

Doesn't break. Neck of tulip, waning
Clothes rod. And, yes, the rules.

Because the heart is not straight and narrow.
It curves, sometimes splinters into tributaries,

Carrying all the waste of a community of two:
Words like dead fish floating to the surface,

Gills closed, eyes fixed. But the mouth opens
Like a fresh bruise—purple, bell-shaped—

And you forget yourself, your heart
A wire hanger bending in someone's hands.