



Doorway at Lake Como

after the photograph by Jay Kaufman

It's one of so many Medieval doorways
studded with iron and green men, cornucopia
heavier than alchemical lore. A cursed treasure
within, perhaps under brickwork, fleur-de-lis
burnt into the hearth. Some lesser holy of holies
folded into a strong box the color of rust.
Sepia light as collective

memory. A half dozen skulls
strung together with chains, ex votos
gracing the walls and a Templar knight's
broken visor nearby. An owl
and a gargoyle sculpted into the arch
beg for nightmare – I imagine

a mystic in soot-stained cape
skulking beneath fallen starlight.
Lifting one scuffed boot to the threshold,
he spits a code at the slot, genuflects
backwards and descends
coughing into the crypt.

Stolen remains of crusaders, their ashes
now swept with those at the stakes,
far from the waters the brothers swam
off Isle de Côte, white bones in their teeth.