

Poetry Porch: Poetry

That House

by Michael Todd Steffen

I'd come to feel defects were unavoidable,
maybe even necessary, as much a part
of myself as of the side door of that house
that sometimes wouldn't shut tight,

then would get stuck shut and wouldn't open,
even though the key turned and turned in its knob.
Not to mention the siding. Or the kitchen
that needed a complete overhaul but for some reason

seemed just fine for sandwiches and instant coffee.
I couldn't get started to unpack the boxes
in the spare room I couldn't get started to repaint.
I tried to sit still.

There was a heart in that house. It used to lead me
up the stairs, then back down the stairs.
Was it pulsing, buried inside the floor between—
O Elpinor, you on foot

and me in the dark airplane
by now back on the other side of the world?
To say less
is to say more

when we only go on and on, where the Internet
perhaps prompts us,
our measure for speech the river
Huck and Jim rode to their euphoric bankruptcy.

I could hear the neighbors on the other side of the wall
of that duplex when their plates and silverware
clinked in the sink with as much oblivion
as the ladder in our shared garage

or the leaves weighing down the gutter in the eaves.