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THE FARMER'S GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER

I stand and inhale the fields
That once were forests, lean on
The kissing gate that puckers up
To meet the blood under my wrists,
Tucked inside a hand-me-down anorak:
A rearing head that sniffs out the ancestors
Concertinaed inside my chest, their shadowed
Bodies clearing trees, meaning well.
An attempt to tuck the future in
At bedtime, pacing out plots and filling them
With pigs and painted paddocks with the hooves of
Tomorrow; the pride of coming down from trees
To tiled floors, pulling up homes as if on strings
And to make the world dance for us, anew.
I reach for them but, knowing better,
Extend my arm further,
Pluck out forefathers who didn't farm but
Foraged, who hadn't learned to hoist flags
Yet. I long to swing pendulum legs from trees
And camp out among them until
All of this is over,
Stoop below skies of pitch and hum
In a key that doesn't have a name yet, belly

To the heavens, howling at what hangs there.
Which is I see now
The promise of the view from the kissing gate.
A dream to consume that leaves us now
in turn, devoured, teeth and all, and although
I'd like to turn a heel, I won't quake
To take my place among a line of staunch traditionalists
Who don't live to save face but to sew well,
To empty barns and stuff them with days,
Open the fields and fill them with wild minutes,
Turn the soil back to itself, for who am I to wave a
Tartan in the face of Fortune, not the kind
You can earn or bury but the Fortune you meet
Whilst leaning on a gate, who winks as he
Passes through

Written as a contribution to the Winternachten international literature festival The Hague by Leena Norms.