1999

Thresholds

Jon Thompson

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.5089

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.
Jon Thompson

Thresholds

In front of the temple there is a large bronze gong with a long thick tasselated rope an officer looks down into his viewfinder taking a picture of it he has approached its threshold tentatively as a stranger beholding a strange place without God or gods he has stopped before its dim interior he wants to capture its foreignness for the future for now he is still before the folding doors of the entrance he is looking in to take away the image of the tall brass incense tree the story of ascending smoke which is his story a story in which he does not exist a story in which the photographer of the photographer does not exist a story in which the photo fades with the smoking tree a story in which the story gets in the way of the story that cannot be told

Absolution

What can we take from the past a past that was never anything more than a succession of marked and unmarked moments continuously flowing together or flown each the ancestor to the other my ancestors purged those deaths that death left behind so little so much against the weight of darkness a lifetime ago the winter light offered a kind of absolution it drenched the stones of that city with a summery openness in which stones could be seen as something more and less than stones on one corner a monk and a nun stand by a building chanting his head is shaved hers is hooded they are swathed in long robes the woven basket at their feet is full of alms holding onto short paddle-drums they neither regard nor disregard the