Absolution

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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 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
people passing by but give witness to
    those things beyond the eye
that define the complexion of each day
    the vast tissue of connections that
decides each act their day nothing less than the open
    acknowledgement of those unpayable debts a practice
like fully living or dying
    like seeing or hearing for the first time
like the gift of giving or receiving freely
    like the world suddenly
without sound or suddenly full of it

BLACK MARKET
Tokyo, 1946

In the burned-out open-air square there are
no stalls no animals cars or banners just thousands of men
some still in uniform some in partial uniforms
some in topcoats and fedoras some in chinese coats looking
for something that can’t be found the disaster
evident from the piles of valuables spread on blankets
from a bird’s eye view the man-clusters slowly drift
into new clusters the castastrophe has already
happened this is the post-apocalypse all the odd jumble of the past
the detritus of former lives is struggling
to be reborn in the buying and selling a new life everyone is looking
down see the one who squats on his haunches to
inspect a book see the tall man in black who refuses
to buy further back a white-hot light boils overhead
everyone is becoming less and less they are
fading not even becoming
a negative of themselves and in that bright light
the buildings are dissolving and that light
that unnatural musical light is breaking
in waves over a future which is unaware