

SHIN YU PAI 白欣玉

b. 1975



Embarkation*

(A Quintet for the Year of the Dog)

Butter lamp, incense stick, bees wax votive, the occasion of poem
rites I enact to set the world aglow
with the light of desire, the fire of the mind

5 adorned in the colors of the eight temples,
the caretakers of the wang yeh (gods)
march through the streets of the seaside town
the lone envoy bearing a square yoke,
parades the wooden boat through narrow lanes until nightfall,
when the barge is brought to rest upon a bed of joss (paper)

10 earlier that night, men load the boat with hand-written wishes,
the misfortunes and plague of my past year
to be piloted up to the heavens in a blast of fireworks
that deafens the crowd that came to bear witness to ceremony;

we observe as each of us does
15 some of us bail out before a thing is done
to escape our ghosts;
we watch it burn;

I can't unsnarl the knot of unmet want,
so I sever it in heat,
20 draw the cord into flame to free myself
from the clutch of haunting,
to disembark at the latitude
of where I give up the ship



* Watch the poetry video by Scott Keva James 詩作影片觀賞

2019



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