

Map of Matter

I could talk about the past like anyone else
about surfing the winds of childhood
to get here and the things I remember
as if the limbs of earth can be owned
by reminiscence
but that's someone else

I don't have a story to go back to
or a scenario to play out Everything
I'm from was made up by the Shaw Brothers
and their starlets under dramatic lighting
cat-eyes tinted lips mansions cocktails

Those were not the days and I didn't live
through them as much as I slewed
across the surface of their rotten skin
because the decayed hand of the past reaches
for everyone not one finger of truth

*Don't lie. Don't lie. My memory speaks in sleep. But be
creative and quick about it. Soak in the salt
of the world's illusion. Deliquesce. Be true.*

I can reassemble the dismembered limbs
of the past by ingesting them
then making a new body of history
and pining for it like a farmer weeping
for her country lost to flood and fire

I have total recall of the Belle Epoque the Age
of Innocence the Age of Anxiety the turn
of the century the Ways of the Swanns
by demarcating the borders reconfiguring the atoms
of my birth I'm born again
and again

In the movies in the library I watched and read read
and watched until I was entombed
with recollection molecules degrading in travel
in moves
from East to West village to city town to town

The spaces between I lit with candlelight of nostalgia
to illuminate the path of sequined shifts beaded gowns
satin shoes I wore them over my tattered t-shirt dirty feet

Once I moved on a flat space a blank topography
a village for squatters the homeless
not worth visiting or revisiting
in the dark in my telling it transforms
becomes the enchanted forest apples snakes gardenias
a place I find myself time and time
again then again In my telling (tell and retell)
I redraw the geography of slanted truth
and an ending happy
enough to last forever and ever
after that

Bio:

Joanna Sit is the author of *My Last Century* (2012), *In Thailand With the Apostles* (2014), and most recently, *Track Works*. She is working on an ethnographic narrative called *The Reincarnation of Red* and another book of poems called *Fantastic Voyage*.