

Memory

Nguyen Bao Chan¹
Vietnam

Memory is playing I-spy
With the things one remembers

It finds a wooden doll
And dreams of the forest

It picks up a shell
And hears the ocean

It sees the early sunlight
And feels warm kisses

It brushes bare skin
And is burned by love's embers

It sips the night dew
And feels an old thirst again

It touches the river
And the ripples run away

It hides itself
And discovers the sky

It turns round
And falls into the abyss...

(Written in July 2005)

Little Indiaⁱ

Serangoon
leans on the chest of sighing wind
stroking its back.
Thick incense
shrouds Indian blackness.
The Hindu temple is ecstatic.
Its fragrance spreads
through the narrow streets
and is lost in a distant dream.
Blue night
radiates on Krishna's face.
Flooded with melody of Bansuri flute
the Indian tea cup is shaken.
We burn our lips
sipping love.
Fragrant desire
rises melodiously...

Little India
fills with day,
breaking into tiny pieces
the sounds of cars, voices, footsteps...
The room is filled
with the jumbled traces of last night's love.
The curtains blink
still half-asleep.
The tea cups are still moist with the last tea drops.
Everything leaves the night
and falls towards the sunlight,
seeing numberless faces,
finding numberless paths,

ⁱ Reference to Little India, Singapore, and written in July 2006. Translated from Vietnamese by Nguyen Bao Chan, and edited by Harry Aveling.

reaching colorful buildings
hearing strange sounds.
Krishna's loving words
fall silent...

¹ Nguyen Bao Chan was born on 23 November 1969, at Haiphong, Vietnam. She is the author of two books, *The Burned River* (1994), which received an award from the Vietnamese Literary and Art Union, and *Going Through Winter* (1999). She is one of the one hundred Vietnamese poets included in the recent bilingual anthology *The Defiant Muse: Vietnamese Poems from Antiquity to the Present*, published in 2007 by the Feminist Press, City University of New York and The Women's Publishing House, Hanoi.

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