

## April moon

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Our Chinese poet, Li Bai,  
had drunk the moon in ecstasy.  
Our fairytale had flown a maiden  
to live there long before astronauts.

Debussy recreated the dreams  
of Verlaine's birds on moonlit trees,  
the drizzle of fountains on white stone,  
*pianissimo* in night air.

Young Hemingway found nothing  
simple in Paris – not the moonlight,  
nor the breathing of someone  
resting beside you in that light.

You know all that, of course –  
nights when your moon has shone  
on a path beside a lotus pond,  
your fish soothed by michelia scent...

But this photo you took has another tale to tell.  
This moon is not like any of the others.  
It was a moon rising over a Singapore sky  
on Children's Day at 6.20 pm in the year 2001...

... the sun not yet setting,  
the sky a clear blue still,  
this moon is but a film of white,  
barely visible, almost transparent,  
unassuming in daylight, yet  
with no apology for its being....

How many times  
have we missed such a moon  
or other realities not quite  
claiming existence for themselves?

You saw it, cherished it  
enough to take its picture.

But where was I  
this Wednesday in April

when you encountered this moon  
six years, three months, twenty-four days ago?

What was I doing, thinking, feeling,  
as you composed its image miles and miles away?

Surely you did not know then – nor did I –  
you would share your remembrance with me today.

If Time did not travel from the past to the present,  
if it were to move instead from the future to the past,  
then perhaps we would both know we were to meet, that one reason  
you saved your vision that evening was for me to greet this moon today....

The Soul of the World understands destiny in *The Alchemist*.  
And the universe in *The Golden Compass* is full of intentions.  
Some have faith God holds all the days and nights of our lives,  
knows how fragments of our memories fuse into meaning

even as children chant in Cantonese about a moon pouring over the earth

on New Year's Eve as they pick untranslatable fruits, a pig's stomach,  
the hide of an ox, a whip to ride a horse, the roof beam of a house being built,  
a knife cutting greens, a round bin cover, a boat sinking, three children –  
one floating, one drowning, one hiding under a bed to eat deep fried sticks of dough

for no reason but rhyme and the easy joy of play.

(27 July 2007, Rodrigues Court, on Mark Malby's "Moon 2")

## Rendezvous with glow worms

Inside the Waitomo Caves,  
stalactites and stalagmites grow  
a centimetre in a century.

Water drops from ceilings of  
rock. The air is moist with darkness.  
On the black river, a boat gently

floats into a world of glow  
worms – tiny stars of soft blue light  
constellating into galaxies.

In their universe, worms are  
born, grow into adults, shine, mate  
for as long as seven hours, give

birth to a hundred babies,  
one by one, die right after while  
others are born and in turn enchant

other mates with their glimmer,  
breed, expire within a few days –  
an everlasting birth of light, a

never-ending darkness of  
death. In this grotto is all there  
is, all that can be, has been, will be.

Perhaps the worms know there are  
other caves, other colonies  
of their kind. Perhaps they wonder not

as they die before ever  
leaving this cosmos lit by their  
loves. In their innocence, they need not

yearn to travel to beyond  
this cave, this charmed existence of  
darkness, light, love, death, darkness, light, love...

... to another space afar  
where stars are born, where a day is  
as a million years, a million years,  
  
a day, where angels can love  
without mating. There is no end  
to love, no distance, no longing, if

time does not exist.

(25 December 2006, Waitomo Caves)

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