

## **Madeleine Lee**

### **angkor**

in angkor wat, where it begins and ends—  
start at the churning of the milk of the sea  
and a fight of good and bad on library walls  
ordered by twelfth century hindhu kings,  
one after another, temple after temple.  
side profiles, bas reliefs, cornerstone beliefs.  
the irony hits home like a demolition crane,  
smashing earlier notions of orderly blocks.  
now tumbled down, fortress, walls and arches  
give way to true nature and inevitable history.  
the churning continues in the spinning head,  
making me dizzy upon hearing the voices,  
the churning continues in the turning stomach,  
leaving me nauseous now facing the choices.  
statues mindlessly, murderously decapitated,  
leaving tombs stone, cold, clammy, empty.  
the headless buddhas sit with equanimity,  
bleeding saffron on blackened sandstone,  
buddhist views superimposed then beheaded,  
leaving just the heart where it ends and starts.

### **three images**

an image held in my left hand  
captured by an unshuttered eye  
etched chemically on negative plate  
transformed positive by process  
you are way south, down, under,  
near the austral skies  
where the spires of the apostles  
pierce the ozoneless blue eyes  
i trace your outline with my fingertip  
it falls short of one dimension

still it send soft feathers up my spine  
reminder of things done and said

an image held in my mind's eye  
painted with overwrought imagination  
a fine brush of young yak's hair  
lingers, then colours with synaptic flair  
you must nearly touch the sky, high  
as you drink oxygen-shy breaths  
all around snow-white ground  
pure and bare as pure land dares  
i trace your outline with my thought  
attempting, as if, to fill the blanks  
nothing descript really comes to mind  
your aura is all my senses know

an image held deep in my heart  
somewhere between left ventricle and soul  
a composition of brilliant gold  
of purple passion and deep orange stark  
the sun rising in eastern sky  
pierces my thoughts, pierces my eye  
the images, now overexposed  
retreats to hide in deepest recollect  
we are sailing in white sea breeze  
deep blue trampoline, deep green sea  
colours combine, lives intertwine  
at once. at one. you, me, we.

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### **autumn in new jersey**

the orange of princeton town  
has rubbed off on the trees  
in the air there is autumn,  
a biting cold, a ready freeze.  
the napping homes wink their eyes,  
a bicycle goes tentatively by,

its bell the only timbre  
heard on august campus ground.  
across the road the leaves do fall,  
golden, orange, red-hued all  
yield to stern cold might  
as wintry covers blanket the night  
a squirrel, impetuously crossed  
the road—now in the icy draft  
he is unforgivingly stiff,  
his severed body bloody as fallen leaves.

**Madeleine Lee**'s first book, *a single headlamp*, was published in August 2003. Her second, *fifty three/zero three*, was published in October 2004 and launched to a performance directed by Krishen Jit. Her poem "coffee" was adapted into a short film, "1000 Words", for Arts Central television. She is collaborating in a multi-media poetry-dance production to be presented in Monaco. Madeleine read in Singapore's poetry festival, *Wordfeast*, in January 2004 and in the Kuala Lumpur Literary Festival in July 2004. An investment manager, Madeleine sits on the boards of public and private companies in Singapore including YST Music Conservatory (National University of Singapore), the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and International Women's Forum. She is a Chartered Financial Analyst and a Fellow of the Eisenhower Exchange Fellowship.