

Preface (I)

Nicolette Wong

When I could no longer stay sane living in a tiny studio seven years ago, I left my place in Prince Edward and moved to a semirural area in the New Territories. The soundscape of the village fascinates me. In the afternoon, I would walk down an alley and hear the swish of a badminton birdie flying across the air. At night I listen to an andante of cicada songs and cats' yowls.

I carry my solitude with me as I roam the village. It is a place where traditions reign and one should be mindful of what they say. I watch pedestrians dart down the pavement, tight-lipped and squirmy in their steps. I see us gliding into space. Slipping into invisible capsules that await at the end of the street. Is it just me, or is everyone contained in a vacuum?

#

As the backdrop to our days morphs from clamour into silence, I trace the spaces that come to light in this collection. No matter how familiar they seem in real life, these spaces are new to me when I encounter them as a reader. Walk through that doorway. Envision those who are missing or gone and meet them by the sea. Hold them close before they pull away. Before time becomes hazy and we find ourselves standing outside a downtown department store. The traffic lights are flashing like bruises blooming on the skin. The streets are heaving. Perhaps the city is giving birth to itself all over again, as it has done many times in the past.

When the memories and ghosts fade, I want to know what we talk about when

we talk about love in this place. Ways to reach one another even as we drift apart. Ways to find our footing when there is a narrow gate we cannot pass through. I am grateful to our contributors for sharing their works in these pages—you bring us into spaces that are intimate or expansive, yet always open and truthful.

I would like to thank Polly Ho and Atom Cheung from Kubrick Poetry Society for their insights and support throughout this project. As collaborators and guest readers, they brainstormed the theme for this collection and reviewed shortlisted submissions with me. Since its founding in 2006, KPS has organised many readings and workshops, bringing together writers and artists from Hong Kong and overseas. A special thank you goes to our book designer Zac Choy for his amazing work. A debt of gratitude is owed to Eddie Tay, our series editor at Cart Noodles Press, for his continued support.

Finally, I want to thank the readers who spend time with this book and share space with us.

Preface (II)

Polly Ho & Atom Cheung

It was December 2021 when our friend and fellow writer, Nicolette Wong, brought up the idea of collaborating with Kubrick Poetry Society on a book project. Over a long conversation in an artist's studio, we tried to come up with a theme that Hong Kong people would relate to. We arrived at “making space”, which sounds intriguing and almost surrealist. As Hongkongers, we are always on the run, occupied with work and event after event. We are constantly making plans for travelling, studying, and our children's education. It seems ironic that those of us who inhabit this place would be writing about making space when we often lack autonomy and personal space in this efficiency-driven city. “In Hong Kong”,¹ a poem by Agnes Lam, captures the heart of the way we live:

In Hong Kong,
no one stands still.

People are always
going somewhere,
trying to change something...

In the months that followed, we read shortlisted submissions that Nicolette shared with us. The arrival of these works forced us to make time for reading, which was a bit of a challenge. Personal time is so precious. A time to enjoy a movie, a good breakfast, a nothing-to-do afternoon, a weekend without digital notifications — all come at a cost, and so we have come to learn the importance of setting boundaries, avoiding the phone, and saying no. Carving out a space of our own seems like a

lifelong endeavour. How is it done? What gets in the way? How do we know when we've found it and what comes after that?

We want to take this opportunity to thank Nicolette, who invited us to take part in this project. It has been a fun bookmaking journey, and we have had a fruitful time discussing works that we admire. In addition, we are grateful to Eddie Tay for his support for this project. Lastly, we are pleased to have Zac Choy design the book's layout and beautiful cover.

Our hope is you enjoy this book and discover new spaces, both around you and within.

¹ Lam, Agnes. (2022). "In Hong Kong." *Turning Pages: An Annual Creative Writing Journal at Chemnitz University of Technology*, Issue 4: pp. 38-39.