

Foreword

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HIGH-RISES SEIZE NOW THE SUN

*An Anthology of The HKBU Century Club
Citywide English Poetry Competition (2018-2021)*

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The HKBU Century Club Citywide English Poetry Competition
(2018-2021)



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Foreword

I have judged and been involved with a few literary competitions for emerging writers over the years, and I have never seen one—I doubt there could be one—where the writers, given license to write about anything, were so devoted to a single theme: the city where they live. Of the twenty-one poems collected here, all but a few take Hong Kong as setting or subject—typically both—and even the outliers bear traces of the city: an idiomatic Cantonese phrase, a particular relationship with water or food.

One of the vocations of poetry is to make sense of life in times of apparent chaos and great change. Presently, whatever one's political outlook or perspective on history and globalization, we may acknowledge that Hong Kong finds itself at a juncture that few cities ever have. The older generation will not bequeath to the younger the city they grew up in, not quite. And so the younger residents—so the young poets in this anthology—find themselves coming of age in an uncertain home. In the global imagination, Hong Kong has long been seen as a place that sits between East and West, between tradition and modernity—a *floating city according to Xi Xi's Marvels of a Floating City*. The young poets presented here understand as keenly as any previous generation what it means to hover between worlds in Hong Kong, so their poems are often inflected by a feeling of *love at last sight*, and a reaching into an unknown future for properly orienting symbols.

Yung Wing Chit's "Neon on Fabric, Wooden Hopp, 6 in." attempts to render an image of Hong Kong that at last becomes "limitless, distant". Lo Chun Hung's "A Walk in Victoria Harbour" seizes upon religious references, particularly the betrayal of Christ, to achieve its sense of a place balanced on a precipice. The idea of Hong Kong as an object of nostalgia and desire at once, able to inform the dreams of residents even from a distance, finds its way into poems such as Pang Hing Shun's "Moksha", a loving meditation on a grandmother who "sits on the sofa in Zhongshan, betting on the horse races in Hong Kong". And Stephanie Keung Wing's "Burdens", which depicts the daily routine and thoughts of a Hong Kong fruit seller, valorises simple, human dreams of the kind that hold up families, then communities, and then cities, regardless of the aims of rulers.

The poems collected here, as the title of the anthology suggests, are the runners-up and prize winners of the HKBU Century Club Citywide English Poetry Competition from the years 2018 to 2021. With the particular help of the HKBU Century Club, and my colleagues and co-organisers of the competition Mr James Shea and Dr Tammy Lai-Ming Ho, we publish these poems with the hope they might find readers within and beyond Hong Kong and give voice to a special chapter in the city's history. I have only been in Hong Kong a short time at the time of writing, and in that time I have been amazed at the energy and creativity of this city. That energy and creativity is discoverable in these poems.

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