

Gillian Bickley, *China Suite and other Poems*, Proverse Hong Kong, November 2009.

From a review of by Mia Ball in *Word Matters*, Volume 60, Number 2, Autumn 2010, p. 39. *Word Matters* is published by The Society of Teachers of Speech and Drama, UK.

"Having worked in Hong Kong on several occasions, I opened Gillian Bickley's book wondering if the poems would bring back memories. I was not disappointed as I looked at titles such as 'David at Tai Po Market KCR Station' and 'Sipping Tea at the Tea Museum, Hong Kong Park'. Many of the poems are brief snap-shots of particular moments from the author's experiences in Hong Kong, where Dr Bickley has lived since the 1970s.

Some evoke the moment as a clear visual picture, as in 'On the Bus to Tuen Mun', or in the case of 'A Relative Quiet at Yam O' it is sounds that create the image. These short pieces are among the most notable in the anthology. Other longer poems will use the image as a starting point to deliver a moral or opinion.

The poem, 'Shooting Star, or Heritage Hindered' looks at the demolition of the original Star Ferry terminal on Hong Kong Island and then ponders on the destruction of history. This poem provided me with a truly memorable line, talking of, 'permanently puzzling posterity', with its echo of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's poem, 'Constantly Risking Absurdity'. Not all the poems are born out of Hong Kong. Several were the result of a visit to Beijing prior to the 2008 Olympic Games. But whatever the setting, it is people who mostly attract Dr Bickley's attention and when she lets the pictures speak for themselves she is most successful. The final poem, 'Pumpkin Man', is a clear example.

The book comes with two CDS which feature the author reading her poems. Dr Bickley reads with clarity and respect for the verse line."