

AN ANTHOLOGY OF CREATIVE WORKS

# ***OTHER WORLDS***



TEN PIECES BY  
ASIAN ARTISTS AND WRITERS

CURATED BY  
ATELIER ARCADIA

# other worlds

an anthology of creative works

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# *I NEED TO FIND A PLACE*

BY CHIN YUQIN (CASEY)

I need to find a place.

This is a difficult undertaking, for one would typically start by knowing where to start, but it's exactly that *where* that I'm looking for. Naturally, this eliminates *when* as well as an avenue. It is not surprising information that when and where are two cuts from the same thing.

So, having no *where* or *when* to begin with, I consider my remaining options - *what* is difficult too. I can tell you what the place should be *like*, but I cannot tell you what it is precisely. To know that, I would have to already *be* within it, and no one can really be in a place without knowing where or when it is, not in a way that counts anyway. But that *what it's like* does bring me to some parameters of description, with which I could start to circle my target, even if the circle is very wide and crudely drawn.

Here they are: firstly, the place must be quiet, but not silent. It needs a voice, but one only partially discernable to me, for if no communication is possible I would be too afraid, but if too much is communicable there would be no point in me looking for it.

Secondly, the place must be larger than the exact mass of my body, including my thoughts, measures, and breath, or I would not be able to inhabit it without some kind of violence to either it, or my own person.

Thirdly, the place must not already be occupied by anyone living at the time I find it, for time travel is far too much trouble just to avoid unwanted companionship.

Lastly, the place must be/come home.

With that, *what* is exhausted as a source for beginning, and I move on to *who*.

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Thale. That is a name I think of first. It is not my own, but to look for a place outside of myself using my own name would be foolish, don't you think? So when I look down the lane of *who*, I ask "*Who is Thale?*", not "*Who am I?*"

I know who I am, on good days. At the very least, I know that who I am is enough of a known that it would not lead me to the new place I'm looking for.

So I think of Thale.

I don't know anybody named Thale, but it's a name I like and that has long stuck with me without me meaning it to. It comes from a kind of plant, thale cress, the first that flowered in space, and since learning that I have wanted quite badly for someone to be named Thale. The name has a power over me. I have thought, repeatedly, about who someone named Thale might be. Might they be hearty and stubborn? Might they be quiet and strict? Might they have a watery voice, and like things neat and tidy and the temperature just so, and when asked if they like their name they would shrug and say, I guess, I don't really think about it?

This is when I noticed my mistake. By asking who Thale is, I have created too many Thales.

The direction Thale should have offered me in my search is instead a wobbling mass of arrows, pointing every which way, with warm Thales and cold Thales and friendly Thales and quick-tempered Thales and lost Thales and found Thales and Thales who know the right place, and Thales who do not.

It's not really a bad thing, to think about so many Thales, but it's not very helpful in finding a place. It just gets me all caught up on Thale, without knowing where I might meet them, if such a person should even exist.

So, reluctantly, I stop thinking about Thale.

/

The next consideration I must take, then, seems to be *how*. This one is easy. I ask myself, how do I get to the place I'm looking for? And I know, I must walk through the right door.

Doors go to places. So it stands to reason that the right door would go to the right place. But the tricky part comes in *recognising* a door. Some are obvious, they are flat and have handles and open when asked. But some are difficult, much more difficult. Sometimes they move, or refuse to open, or take on strange forms like a street or a cat or a particular smell over an open expanse of ocean.

The secret, so I have been told, is to recognise a door not by its shape, but by the person on the other side, waiting to answer it.

So I listen. I spill my listening through wall cracks and mouse holes and right up against windows, listening, listening, listening for a version of myself who has already found the answer.

Which door are you behind? I ask with my listening.

My own, you answer. My own and some way yours.

How long have you been waiting?

As long as has been taken, and as long as it will take.

Am I to find you?

Perhaps. Will you look for my door, and not yours?

So I say, yes, yes, I will look for your door if it will have me.

And you say nothing more. The invitation is finished, the how is complete, and the door is waiting to be opened. All that remains is to actually knock.

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At last, so close to my target, I seek the final direction of searching. The core of all questions, as some may say, or the most important, as others might insist. Personally, however, I have never thought it as dramatic as that, and pretty overrated as far as questions go. I've found that it often leads to looking inward too much, tangling everything up only to arrive at no worthwhile answer, no outward momentum to move. Most of the time it is rather redundant too - after all, does it really matter if I understand the reasons for any endeavour, when those reasons will act on me regardless of my questioning them? Does it really serve me to understand the depths of intention, when that knowledge is already present in the domino fields of action and effect? When rippling forces are already at large, how helpful is it to question the undercurrent?

Nevertheless, it bears asking. So I look past my own, perhaps stubbornly narrow, rejection of it, and ask: *why?*

Why am I looking for a place?

Why have I yet to find it?

Why, ever, would the place I am looking for want to be found?

For once, as usual, I am alone in asking and answering. Ah, yes, that is the other reason I do not like whys. *Why* is a lonely question.