

舒巷城：詩七首

Seven Selected Poems

By Shu Xiangcheng

Translated by Eva Hung

Resurrection

Do you know?
In the dim horizon where the sea touches the sky
Red clouds of dawn rise slowly,
Afterglow—from how many centuries ago?—
Of the pearl divers' sorrowful blood.

Do you know?
In the blissful smiles of
A baby's eyes
I see the body of spring
Bruised, battered and buried ten thousand years ago.

Do you know?
Trees have fallen; trees have fallen and died.
We have coal; we have coal.

May, 1966

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Shu Xiangcheng was born and educated in Hong Kong. He started writing during the Anti-Japanese war, and left Hong Kong for China in 1942, during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. After his return to Hong Kong in 1948, he gradually established himself as a leading poet as well as a writer of fiction and prose.

Anchor

The anchor drops sunset and dusk
Down to the depths of the sea. The ship
Stays, sleeps,
No destination tomorrow.
Starlight from a century ago
Vanishes in the distance; perhaps
A moon will rise from the sea tonight
And a hundred-year-old spirit will be buried
Buried in the deepest recess of the sea.
In the rapid currents of time the ghost-ship
Leaves nothing but broken spars.

The anchor sinks. The steel-grey harbour
Rusts. Someday in broad daylight
On an enchanted shore, the rusted anchor
Will become a block of glimmering marble.

September, 1967

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Birdsong in a City

They're selling "electronic birdsong machines" for \$16 on the streets
For we hardly ever hear birdsong

No larks in the city beating their wings under an azure sky
No cranes singing or cuckoos calling
From bus-stop to bus-stop
What leaves there are have withered.
Against the serried steel window-frames
No birds homing to nest. Who knows
Whither the exiled geese rejoin their files
Or in which wood the thrush hides its sweet songs

So, might as well buy an "electronic birdsong machine" to take home

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Walking past a Monumental Mason

These days I often walk past
A mason's in the neighbourhood
And see a young man
By the marble slabs squatting
A chisel in his left hand a hammer in his right
Merrily humming a tune
Carving someone's tombstone
There is nothing funny about it, I reflect:
He is alive. He is young
Why should death be on his mind

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Cable Car on Victoria Peak

It cannot soar
Like the iron birds in the sky:
Tethered to the mountain
With shackles of steel
It crawls
Between the tilting years
Watching the sea underfoot turn into land
It crawls
On the border of a metropolis
Watching the sun set onto a skyscraper.

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Ten Lines

So many nights
The lamplight on my manuscript paper
Spilled onto Mother's emaciated face, her wrinkles
In this place where land is gold

We work
In undernourished space
Rest
In narrow beds

And that is how my mother died
She was cremated.

January, 1972

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Seven Lines

His mother lived under the same roof with him
His only kin
But he was tired of her, and tired of
The words she repeated dozens of times a day

That period of his life, that debt—
For the first time he understood his mother's loneliness
One night after her death.

September 1987

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