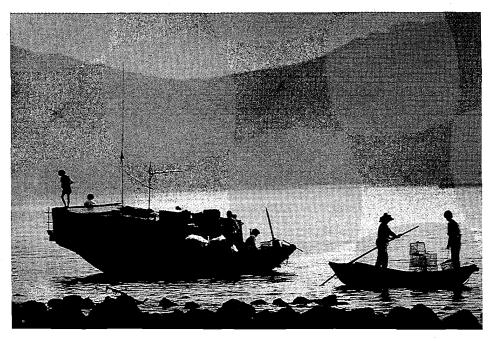
CHAN Chi Tak

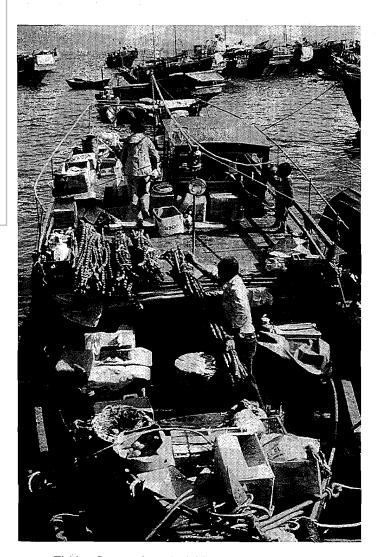
Boat and Home

I remember a windless night and your home on the waves you spoke of bitter sea water, the stink of fish and the way you rock from side to side as you sleep

at times you returned to the calm of the typhoon shelter with a full catch saying you wanted to go out again, into that life with its dangers, vast waters but this night as the yellow bulb gently swayed you too savoured this serenity in the cabin then each novelty stowed in its place granted that it was a moment to hold dear



Fishing Activities.
Collection of the Hong Kong Tourist Association.



Fishing Community—Activities.
Collection of the Hong Kong Tourist Association.

radio played pop tunes, news reports and the stories behind the news divulged variations in temperature and wind velocity on deck, books and magazines you've skimmed their miniscule, unsteady words distorted radio waves harsh TV images this too seemed a world that reeks of blood

what did the grownups below deck discuss, their voices ponderous, great events or small? all beyond our grasp at the last you signed a Christmas card for me later sadly lost in moving house faulty memory has let slip your name just this remains on the card no hackneyed Hong Kong junk returning in the sunset but a home a boat braving the elements, making a living

12 March 1995

Translated by Janice Wickeri

CHAN Chi Tak

Flag

You're motionless then flutter Is it the wind that stirs you or do you unfurl your being at the wind

Hanging from the window of that pre-war Canton-style building Another is raised over the colonial dormitory that faces it Article for burning or veneration Now mass-produced stuck in lapels Now imprisoned liberated whereabouts unknown Though you wave above the multitude You cannot give voice to their aspirations

Centre frame: a toast You in the background How long will you have to suffer this dubious role

The people's century the buried years Impulse to war sole perfection "Landlords and capitalists justify themselves through you"* without thereby gaining peace for the multitude The wind does not subside But you just want to hang your head in despair as if everyone had retracted their anger and their joy sparing not even a cold glance for you Even if x day x year these earnest words were spoken: You're still young students

Dusk bids you lie down
So you gently descend but change your mind
Determined to halt at half mast

5 November 1995 Translated by Janice Wickeri

^{*}Mu Dan, Flag (Shanghai: Wenhua shenghuo chubanshe, 1948).

CHAN Chi Tak

My Paper-Cut City

—What did you wish for

—God save my city

This used to be sea Workers coming off the docks Spilling into the dark street Now it's a park, a shopping mall Road workers start their drills in the blazing sun Out runs the sound turning into words read every day My teacher said in the past every day had a little hope like a dim star Time goes by filling up new buildings and ways of speaking Coming back from abroad Opening up an old book again Here in Hong Kong on the Pearl River estuary in south China It's the end of 1995 Throngs of people hurry through the streets Bustle everywhere cross the street Exit the station pass by the shops see what this holiday might bring "Two bamboo slips fell the first time A-sha picked up the divination slips put them back in the holder, shook again, This time, he shook out only one.

he said"*

everyone asked

^{*}Quoted from Xi Xi, My City (Taipei: Yunchen, 1989), p. 160.

Dark blue clouds overhead Blot out the dim stars I'm on the street It's the end of 1995 here in Hong Kong on the Pearl River estuary Who's that? It's you on the tram childhood friend I haven't run into for years passing right by me just passing by? going home? You wave to me and then merge into the multi-coloured rainbow of decorative lights that materialize briefly at holidays I saw you make your historic appearance asked the tram for the temporary loan of an old friend then waited tranquilly, respectfully, for sincere dialogue Words on the page make allowance for vast ideas await the eventual re-emergence of song out of silence "What are you laughing at, Qiao? Is this another of your pranks? Look at you, the way you laugh . . . Look at you, choking with laughter. Are you tired? Want to go to sleep? I see you tossing and turning again as you lay there. Please get better, Qiao."*

^{*}Quoted from Ye Si, *Papercuts* (Hong Kong: Tianyuan Publishing House, 1988), p. 284.

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Where are you getting off?
Wan Chai's already behind us
This is the end of 1995 here in
Hong Kong on the Pearl River estuary in south China
—is it a picture postcard sail returning in the sunset
or a basic law of the way people live?
What station is this? Then we must say farewell
You still think communication is possible?
Even though friendship is like an old house a star
all hauled away mountains moved for reclamation
The scene changes rapidly
opportunities for the taking
still put zest into my city

28 December 1995

Translated by Janice Wickeri

Chan Chi Tak: Four Poems	19
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David Clarke 祈大衛

Gloucester Road, Looking Towards Causeway Bay, From the Walkway to the Sun Hung Kai Centre. 24 November 1995.

 ${\it The Metropolis, Visual Research into Contemporary Hong Kong~1990-1996}.$

CHAN Chi Tak

Recycled

A kid flips through a picture book
Beside him two long-haired youths appear
Their book is all words
The kid doesn't know what book it is
but he's seen even smaller words, yellowing pages
in the corner second-hand bookstore
Each in their own corners
they browse and read

Adults in the neighbourhood shop gather round the TV Now what's happened?
They gather to watch the sensational seventies a world of relentless movement that subsides then surges up again Along the streets posters one after another Remember May Fourth Boycott Japanese Goods Oppose Fare Increases
The MTR is completed and roars into an eighties of increased passenger traffic

What did you hear?
Cheers and wails
A racket
along with music I've never heard before
What's all the fuss out there?
All that racket that can even be heard inside
Is it Christmas? or New Year's Eve?
Is something coming to an end?
Memories of nights when the symbolic curtain fell come clearly to mind
and the songs we sang in chorus at school assemblies
Stout of heart and forward go with sincerity and hope
It's like reliving the end of some stage in life, say
the final class of middle school and university

The clock's hands are about to draw together again we're even closer to the end of the century. At this point there's no feeling downcast, no jumping for joy People curb their ecstasy, their hesitation as applicable. Voices break off and gradually fall silent. The light dims and goes out. Curtain's set to rise on another act of history.

In the room they're aware of the hubbub outside But they keep silent
Sensing the gentle pleading through the din the casual call for a dissenting voice in our daily life And how will you dress for the occasion?
Gather up nostalgia and a little sentimentality Put on a windbreaker
Take up an umbrella
All set to go outdoors

March 1996 Translated by Janice Wickeri