

"On My Deathbed"

I want to take another look at the ocean, behold the vastness of tears from half a lifetime

I want to climb another mountain, try to call back the soul that I've lost

I want to touch the sky, feel that blueness so light

But I can't do any of this, so I'm leaving this world

Everyone who's heard of me

Shouldn't be surprised at my leaving

Even less should you sigh or grieve

I was fine when I came, and fine when I left.

-- Xu Lizhi, 30 September 2014

"Conflict"

They all say

I'm a child of few words

This I don't deny

But actually

Whether I speak or not

With this society I'll still

Conflict

-- 7 June 2013

"I Fall Asleep, Just Standing Like That"

The paper before my eyes fades yellow

With a steel pen I chisel on it uneven black

Full of working words

Workshop, assembly line, machine, work card, overtime, wages...

They've trained me to become docile

Don't know how to shout or rebel

How to complain or denounce

Only how to silently suffer exhaustion

When I first set foot in this place

I hoped only for that grey pay slip on the tenth of each month

To grant me some belated solace

For this I had to grind away my corners, grind away my words

Refuse to skip work, refuse sick leave, refuse leave for private reasons

Refuse to be late, refuse to leave early

By the assembly line I stood straight like iron, hands like flight,

How many days, how many nights

Did I - just like that - standing fall asleep?

-- 20 August 2011

"A Screw Fell to the Ground"

A screw fell to the ground

In this dark night of overtime

Plunging vertically, lightly clinking

It won't attract anyone's attention

Just like last time

On a night like this

When someone plunged to the ground

-- 9 January 2014

"A Kind of Prophecy"

Village elders say

I resemble my grandfather in his youth

I didn't recognize it

But listening to them time and again

Won me over

My grandfather and I share

Facial expressions

Temperaments, hobbies

Almost as if we came from the same womb

They nicknamed him "bamboo pole"

And me, "clothes hanger"

He often swallowed his feelings

I'm often obsequious

He liked guessing riddles

I like premonitions

In the autumn of 1943, the Japanese devils invaded

and burned my grandfather alive

at the age of 23.

This year i turn 23.

-- 18 June 2013

"The Last Graveyard"

Even the machine is nodding off

Sealed workshops store diseased iron

Wages concealed behind curtains

Like the love that young workers bury at the bottom of their hearts

With no time for expression, emotion crumbles into dust

They have stomachs forged of iron

Full of thick acid, sulfuric and nitric

Industry captures their tears before they have the chance to fall

Time flows by, their heads lost in fog

Output weighs down their age, pain works overtime day and night

In their lives, dizziness before their time is latent

The jig forces the skin to peel

And while it's at it, plates on a layer of aluminum alloy

Some still endure, while others are taken by illness

I am dozing between them, guarding

The last graveyard of our youth.

-- 21 December 2011

"My Life's Journey is Still Far from Complete"

This is something no one expected

My life's journey

Is far from over

But now it's stalled at the halfway mark

It's not as if similar difficulties

Didn't exist before

But they didn't come

As suddenly

As ferociously

Repeatedly struggle

But all is futile

I want to stand up more than anyone else

But my legs won't cooperate

My stomach won't cooperate

All the bones of my body won't cooperate

I can only lie flat

In this darkness, sending out

A silent distress signal, again and again

Only to hear, again and again

The echo of desperation.

-- 13 July 2014

"I Swallowed a Moon Made of Iron"

I swallowed a moon made of iron

They refer to it as a nail

I swallowed this industrial sewage, these unemployment documents

Youth stooped at machines die before their time

I swallowed the hustle and the destitution

Swallowed pedestrian bridges, life covered in rust

I can't swallow any more

All that I've swallowed is now gushing out of my throat

Unfurling on the land of my ancestors

Into a disgraceful poem.

-- 19 December 2013

"Rented Room"

A space of ten square meters

Cramped and damp, no sunlight all year

Here I eat, sleep, shit, and think

Cough, get headaches, grow old, get sick but still fail to die

Under the dull yellow light again I stare blankly, chuckling like an idiot

I pace back and forth, singing softly, reading, writing poems

Every time I open the window or the wicker gate

I seem like a dead man

Slowly pushing open the lid of a coffin.

-- 2 December 2013

"Upon Hearing the News of Xu Lizhi's Suicide"

by Zhou Qizao , a fellow worker at Foxconn

The loss of every life

Is the passing of another me

Another screw comes loose

Another migrant worker brother jumps

You die in place of me

And I keep writing in place of you

While I do so, screwing the screws tighter

Today is our nation's sixty-fifth birthday

We wish the country joyous celebrations

A twenty-four-year-old you stands in the grey picture frame, smiling ever so slightly

Autumn winds and autumn rain

A white-haired father, holding the black urn with your ashes, stumbles home.

-- 1 October 2014