

Chi Moshu (b. 1980, Yifeng, Jiangxi) grew up with a coal miner father who lost his job. After graduating from high school in 1999, he worked in Dongguan on assembly lines, and as a porter, print shop worker, rubber worker, deliveryman, and warehouse manager. His poetry collections include *Coal Miner Father* and *Branching Dazzling Sunshine*. He has also written books of essays and poetry for children.

The South's Dilemma

Too much talk, the words get worn out.
These poor, sweet adjectives
are sacrificed to modern industry.

Other sentences are stuck on the assembly line.
In Dongguan, the whole Pearl River Delta
turns into a dilapidated wall:
blazing lights glimpsed through a gap.

A fabrication or replacement?
The stars are all asleep
and the 24-hour machines are still there
like sleeping babies shaken awake.

At the end of each day, lies winny through the night.
Sunday is just an extra shift. Sweat and blood
are hidden in the impoverished alleys and sewers;
all the glory gets engraved into memorial stones, sprayed
into the language of advertising.

From order forms, managers, purchasing, production,
and warehouses, then to container cars with heads held high
rushing down the highway to the wharfs

Can it be that we and our lives
are mere flesh-accessories to the machines?

Oh, how many more soundless cries will there be
and how many more people will lose their hometowns

And each morning before the shift we shout:
Good! Great! Fantastic!

Lord, living in this moment
is so beautiful it seems real!