

Zeng Jiqiang (b. 1986, Xinhua, Hunan) began writing poetry in 2002. In 2005 he moved south to Shenzhen and Dongguan, working as a computer technician in an embroidery plant for a year, and then as a spray painter in a toy factory. He has also worked as a warehouse manager and technician. He currently works for a software company in Xiamen.

Here I Gather Up Poetry's Bones

Poetry's flesh has been eaten away
chewed up by pedantic poets
who use sharp teeth to rip it to shreds
these bones of poetry, these cold leftovers
bones that even dogs won't get their noses near
have been tossed into the industrial areas, tossed into the mechanical roar
of the factories
thrown into dim workshops, thrown onto assembly lines
thrown onto the machines, in the midst of helplessness and suffering
no one wants to pick up these stripped bones
"Oh, the great so-and-so..."—the flesh of romantic
poetry! The fresh tender flesh of poetry
smells worse than rotting meat, it isn't for me
it's only good for bloodthirsty ants or for flies.
I peel away the flesh of that poetry
I only want the bones
I want to take wage disputes and backpay, black brick kilns, gas explosions
severed fingers, death, and make it seep into the bare bones. These
abandoned bones are more significant than flesh
none of them know that the calcium in bones
is more nutritious than flesh, more valuable
they don't know that what rots first is the flesh
and what remains is the bones