



Rhapsody in Black: Poems (Chinese Literature Today Book Series)

Jidi Majia

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An indigenous poet of the Nuosu (Yi) people of mountainous southwestern China, Jidi Majia is well known and celebrated among the Chinese. But his lyrical and worldly work, though widely published and honored, has not found its voice in English translation in the West. The poems in *Rhapsody in Black*, presented in Chinese and deftly translated by the gifted and respected Denis Mair, at long last introduce the English-speaking world to this remarkable Chinese writer.

The poetry of Jidi Majia is deeply grounded in the myths and oral traditions of the Nuosu minority. It evokes times past but also speaks with eloquence of our global moment. Replete with cultural textures and local idiom, the poems provide an exquisite opening into the Nuosu world. In their ethnic richness, they also resonate with the voices of the indigenous and the dispossessed, from Native American and South American Indian poets to the African American and aboriginal Australian writers preserving and reshaping cultural identity.

Jidi Majia's voice sounds the depths of natural, cultural, and spiritual reality. In his poem "Voice of the Bimo," the power of a Nuosu ritualist's expression is reflected in his own:

In tones both human and divine, it utters
A praise song for birth and death
When it invokes sun, stars, rivers, and ancient heroes
When it summons deities and surreal powers
Departed beings commence their resurrection!

The poems in this volume broaden and deepen our experience of the world—Jidi Majia's and our own.

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