



Jidi Majia

The Sun Will Still Rise Tomorrow

Translated by Jami Proctor Xu

—Speech for the Opening Ceremony of the Thirtieth Medellin International Poetry Festival (2020)

My Dear Poet Friends:

In these unusual times, we're coming together to convene the Thirtieth Medellin International Poetry Festival. This is a grand undertaking deserving congratulations from poets and lovers of poetry from all over the world, because we all know that in this moment, a virus that's devastated the entire world, and that's still spreading, has already changed the world as a whole. The virus is the shared enemy of all humankind. People living in different regions of the world have vividly experienced this immense change. In some sense, the shock and impact of this change is no less than that of the two world wars during the previous century.

In reality, this pandemic has already profoundly reconstructed relations between nations, geopolitical relations, relations between different ethnic communities, and between systems with different values, as well as different economic systems. I think this world after the contest between globalization and anti-globalization will enter a second kind of global era that's completely different from the present one. It's precisely in the most difficult times like these that poets and poetry should undertake the majestic mission of leading humanity's spirit. We need to consider defending freedom, fairness, and justice as our shared responsibility. We must speak out in strong voices of protest against all sorts of exclusionism, including fascism, racism, and different forms of terrorism to promote the peace, progress and development of all humankind. We must use poetry to smash barriers and separation in all forms; we must do our part to construct an even more equitable, fair, humane world. And it's precisely because of this that the outstanding Thirtieth Medellin International Poetry Festival is opening here. In closing, please allow me to quote from my long poem, *Split-Open Planet*.

This is an enormous shift, it's longer than a century, it can only be calculated in terms of a millennium.

We can't return to the past, because the old houses have all disappeared.

We can't choose to close ourselves off; no matter what material becomes a high wall, it only implies separation.

We can't choose to resist; as soon as prejudice turns to hate, you or I could die.

We don't need to ask those ancient rivers; their sources are full of prehistory's silence.

Perhaps this was the original enlightenment, diverse civilizations in harmony were her children.

Give up the difference of three and try hard to find consensus among seven; this isn't putting the problem off on others.

Within a square might be a round possibility; it's not being prejudiced by first impressions.

Let everyone abandon the laws of the forest; this should be better, not viewing oneself as most important.

Let people try to make bright times last longer rather than bestowing darkness on each other.

None of this is a simple method; it's making all participants aware the future of this planet doesn't just belong to you and me, it belongs to all lives.

I don't know what will happen tomorrow; it's said poets have the ability to foretell the future,

but I won't predict the future, since the boundless oceans didn't leave any traces in the sky.

The light I've praised countless times is now on a triumphant march.
I don't know what will happen tomorrow, but I know the world will be changed.
Yes! No matter what happens, I firmly and steadfastly believe
the sun will still rise tomorrow, dawn's light will be as before, like a lover's eyes.
The warm wind will still blow over the earth's abdomen, mothers and children will
still be playing there.
The blue of the sea will still rise with dreams and, at midnight, become the love nest
of stars.
Most people agree labor and creation will still be the main means through which
people attain fulfillment.
People will keep living, good and evil will keep accompanying them; the struggle
between humankind and itself won't cease.
The entrance to time doesn't have an obvious marker.
Humankind, you must be courageously and exponentially careful.

I wish Medellin International Poetry Festival complete success.

Long live poetry! Long live peace!

Jidi Majia was born in 1961 in southwest China in the largest Yi ethnic area in the country, the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. When he was 24 years old, his collection *Self-Portraits* and *Others* won the second National Ethnic Minority Literary Award in Poetry (1981–1984). At 25, he won China's highest national poetry award, the third National Excellence Award for a Poetry Collection (1985) for his book *Songs of First Love*.

His poetry has been translated into nearly forty languages, and close to eighty volumes of his work have been published in more than forty countries and regions. This makes him the most translated contemporary Chinese poet of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He has received many awards, including the Sholokhov Literary Memorial Award, the Chinese Poetry Soul Award from the Chinese International PEN Association, the South African Mkiwa Humanitarian Award, the European Medal of Poetry and Art HOMER award, the Romanian Contemporary Magazine Award for Excellence in Poetry, the Bucharest Poetry Award, the Janitsky Literature Award in Poland, the Silver Willow Poetry Lifetime Achievement Award from the Cambridge Xu Zhimo Poetry and Art Festival, and the Tadeusz Micinski Expressionist Phoenix Award in Poland. His other books include *The Eagle's Wing and the Sun*, *Identity, Fire and Words*, *I, the Leopard...*, *From the Leopard to Mayakovsky*, *A Great River*, and *Split-Open*

Planet (Regent Press, U.S.). At present Jidi Majia serves as vice-chairman of the China Writers Association.

Jami Proctor Xu (translator) is a poet, translator, and artist. She writes in Chinese and English. She grew up in Tucson, Arizona, and currently splits her time between Northern California and China. Her Chinese poetry collections include *Shimmers* (EMS: Du Shi Series, 2013) and *Suddenly Starting to Dance* (Yi Press, 2016). Her English chapbook *Hummingbird Ignites a Star* was published in 2014. Her poems appear frequently in journals and anthologies in China and the U.S. Jami has translated collections by the Chinese poets Jidi Majia and Song Lin. In 2013 she received a Zhujiang Poetry Award for a non-Chinese poet who has made a significant contribution to contemporary Chinese poetry.