

# Zhai Yongming



*“Zhai Yongming is primarily a poet of inner psychological darkness and the best way to read her isn’t utter gloom at the heart of Zhai Yongming’s poetry is a certain idea of femininity. Zhai declared that she wished to be a poet rather than a poetess, but that in her life she was first and foremost a woman . The images of darkness, water and the spectral light of moon are on prominent display in Zhai’s work.*”

# BIOGRAPHY

Zhai Yongming was born in Chengdu, China, in 1955. Alongside Shu Ting and Wang Xiao Ni, she is one of the greatest contemporary women poets in China. In Chengdu she runs the café "White Nights", the name of which she understands as a gesture of respect to Russian literature and to St. Petersburg. In her café she exhibits fine artists and presents video works and performances. Yongming caused a sensation in China's literary circles with her first volume of poetry "Women" (1986). The difficult cycle of poetry was accompanied by a poetological statement entitled "Nighttime Awareness", which brought her a reputation as a feminist. Repeatedly, the experiences of her periods of time spent abroad – from 1990 to 1992 she lived in New York, in 2000 in Berlin – are the subject of her poems, along with politics, social pressures, the horrors of the Cultural Revolution and the end of Communism. (One poem begins: "Sun, I doubt..."). Some critics note a breach between the early, very condensed, painful, highly dramatic cycles of poems and the later work, some of which was written in the West. This they see as more concrete, relating to "real" situations, some with laconic, comprehensible dialogues and a narrative parlando. Zhai Yongming is among the most productive, top-quality but also quietest of China's young female poets. The style of her poems is often described as black, but this does not mean it can be equated with defeatism. On the contrary, Zhai Yongming often uses the example of woman to investigate – in a critical and highly aesthetic way – mankind's (self-) endangerment and the fundamental problems of human existence.



# HER VIEWPOINT

## English test

her viewpoint shoots from one end of the bed  
to the other to look as your body  
makes its way out of  
clothes mobile phone shoes

and then there are your fingers  
slender outspoken  
as if hearing once more  
that clash of pelvis and daytime

everyone is neutered  
everyone has lost their health  
everyone is exposed outside their bodies

bound for a den of suffering  
even dressed in armour your acupuncture points  
could not be wrapped up at this moment  
every inch of your skin could at last  
grow lazy offered to the touch  
and she will be happy for a time because of it

turn off the light evolution's orgasm says time and again:  
what you are prepared to offer up tonight  
is not that important to her

(their children will witness  
the whole process of birth:  
amniotic fluid blood infant  
charging out in uproar  
no drop of sperm left for choice

## Chinese test

她的视点从床的一端  
射向另一端 看着你的身体  
从一大堆衣服 手机 鞋  
和钥匙中钻出来

还有你的指头  
它们修长 刚直  
似乎能再次听见  
盆骨和白昼的碰撞声

每个人都被阉割了  
每个人的健康都遗失了  
每个人都暴露在他的肉体之外

要去的地方是个苦难窝  
即使穿上盔甲 此时也不能  
把你的穴道包裹起来  
你的每一寸肌肤终究会  
慵懒起来 可供抚摸  
她也会为此快活一番

关灯吧 进化论的高潮一再说

你今晚准备献出来的  
不是那么重要 对她而言

(他们的孩子会看见  
生育的全过程  
羊水 血 婴儿  
唏里哗啦地冲出来  
没留下一滴精子可供选择  
没留下一寸空间可供栖息)

## English test

you must do all you can to stay calm  
a plot detail like the act of vomiting  
suspends its arc light in mid-air  
while I ask for nothing

the body rises and falls wave-like  
resisting, it seems, the invasion of the whole world  
handing it over to you  
a life this rich in danger, a life unwilling to let go  
turns a blind eye to the daily slaughter  
from which planet does it shift so dreadfully?  
liquid does what it wants on dry land, refusing to vanish  
what kind of air-current inhales the sky?  
such swollen gifts, such a small cosmos  
in which sombre forces are stationed  
everything vanishing, everything transparent  
but my most secret blood is made known to the public  
who threatens me?  
something everlasting hidden inside my body  
more powerful than night in its summary of people?

tear-drops soar in a blistering hot night  
vessels lacking any humanity chill the air  
death covers me  
death cannot withstand the pain that runs through everything  
but that face devoid of vitality must not be disturbed  
both terrified and spellbound, while the room is turning black  
daytime was once a part of me, now it has been taken away  
an orange-red light overhead fixes me with its stare  
it stares at the most horrible aspect of this world

## Chinese test

你要尽量保持平静  
一阵呕吐似的情节  
把它的弧形光悬在空中  
而我一无所求

身体波澜般起伏  
仿佛抵抗整个世界的侵入  
把它交给你  
这样富有危机的生命、不肯放松的生命  
对每天的屠杀视而不见  
可怕地从哪一颗星球移来？  
液体在陆地放纵，不肯消失  
什么样的气流吸进了天空？  
这样膨胀的礼物，这么小的宇宙  
驻扎着阴沉的力量  
一切正在消失，一切透明  
但我最秘密的血液被公开  
是谁威胁我？  
比黑夜更有力地总结人们  
在我身体内隐藏着的永恒之物？

热烘烘的夜飞翔着泪珠  
毫无人性的器皿使空气变冷  
死亡盖着我  
死亡也经不起贯穿一切的疼痛  
但不要打搅那张毫无生气的脸  
又害怕，又着迷，而房间正在变黑  
白昼曾是我身上的一部分，现在被取走  
橙红灯在我头顶向我凝视  
它正凝视这世上最恐怖的内容

# MIDNIGHT'S JUDGEMENT

## English test

we need our worries to see ghosts  
in order to see repeatedly the white human outlines  
vanish like mirages at midnight  
otherwise, such a commonplace sound  
fills the room blowing things repeatedly around  
for one person alone to hear vast without limit  
in the brain recollection crawls over the crown of the head  
spinning its web over things eye-witnessed

each night I feel frightened  
faint footsteps in dream  
walk unheard of on the stairs  
repeatedly in motion for one person alone to suffer  
medicine swallowed before sleep  
will cut me off from daytime  
the tender, considerate lover at my side goes off to sleep  
happy, at ease oblivious of the fact that my night spirit  
lies outside his cuckoo cloud land

we need our worries to be afraid  
in order to discover our checkmates  
on day's headstone  
otherwise, the letters of the dead  
would not repeatedly score direct hits on my heart  
and repeatedly give warning of the vigorous arrival  
of this fundamental invisible  
what it excels in: making its majesty  
felt from inside the feelings

each night I wake eyes shut tight  
human forms with clouded faces appear repeatedly  
the enclosing walls and that wall overhead  
coming together in error  
continually the head drops from the shoulders of my companion  
crying and weeping in panic on my behalf  
my next life becoming a burden in his dreams  
strange spaces float in the dark  
adding weight to my familiar taste

we need our worries to die  
in order not to recognize the face of the world even to this day  
otherwise our ancestors would repeatedly question us  
about that miserable all-concentrating fate  
the death of one encompasses the history of everyone  
a dream encompasses every possible method of dying

each night I dream at two in the morning  
the winding moon wraps me tightly  
in its huge tongue so that I cannot get going  
I have seen the snake's face human faces  
the intact body of the goat  
the trace of the crawling spider  
no happiness in any of them!  
and I know all that from dream  
to gentle, considerate hands  
will cut me off from night

# MONOLOGUE

## English test

I, a rhapsodist, am full of the charm of the abyss  
given fortuitous birth to by you. earth and sky  
unite as one, you call me a woman  
and strengthen my body

I am as soft as the white-feathered body of the water  
carrying me in your hands, I hold this world  
dressed in a corporeal mortal-embryo, in sunlight  
I am bedazzled, although you find it hard to believe

the gentlest, most understanding of women  
I have seen through everything yet wish to shoulder my share  
yearning for a winter, an enormous night  
heart taken as the world, I want to hold your hand  
but before you my pose is one of crushing defeat

when you leave, my pain  
vomits my heart from my breast  
to murder you with love, whose taboo is this?  
the sun rises for the whole of the world! for you alone  
I concentrate the most vengeful tenderness on your whole body  
from head to toe, I have means of my own

calls for help, can the soul reach out its hands?  
as my blood, the ocean is able to lift me up  
to the foot of the sunset, does anyone remember me?  
but what I remember is much more than this lifetime

## Chinese test

我，一个狂想，充满深渊的魅力  
偶然被你诞生。泥土和天空  
二者合一，你把我叫作女人  
并强化了我的身体

我是软得像水的白色羽毛体  
你把我捧在手上，我就容纳这个世界  
穿着肉体凡胎，在阳光下  
我是如此眩目，是你难以置信

我是最温柔最懂事的女人  
看穿一切却愿承担一切  
渴望一个冬天，一个巨大的黑夜  
以心为界，我想握住你的手  
但在你的面前我的姿态就是一种惨败

当你走时，我的痛苦  
要把我的心从口中呕出  
用爱杀死你，这是谁的禁忌？  
太阳为全世界升起！我只为了你  
以最仇恨的柔情蜜意贯注你全身  
从脚至顶，我有我的方式

一片呼救声，灵魂也能伸出手？  
大海作为我的血液就能把我  
高举到落日脚下，有谁记得我？  
但我所记得的，绝不仅仅是一生

# MOTHER

## English test

there are too many places one is powerless to reach, the feet ache, mother, you never taught me how to catch that ancient sadness in the greedy pink of dawn. my heart is like you only

you are my mother, I am even your blood bleeding out at daybreak  
a pool of blood forces you, astonished, to see yourself, you wake me up

to hear the sound of this world, you allow me to be born, you let me form twins  
with misfortune, terrible twins of this world. for many years, I have had no recollection of  
tonight's weeping

the light that made you pregnant came from so far away, so suspicious, standing between life  
and death, your eyes possess darkness and how heavy the shadows that penetrate our soles

in your arms, I once laughed as if revealing the answer to a riddle, who is it knows  
that you allow me to realize everything virginally, but I remained unmoved

I regard this world as a virgin, but could it be true that my heart-felt laughing at you  
did not ignite sufficient summers? didn't it?

I was abandoned in this world, all alone, the rays of the sun enveloped me  
did you lose something when, mournfully, you bent down over the world?

time puts me in its mill, and lets me watch myself being pulverized  
ah, mother, will you be happy when I finally fall silent?

no one knows how I love you so wide of the mark, this secret  
comes from part of you, my eyes gaze at you painfully like two wounds

living for the sake of living, I court destruction to oppose an immemorial love  
a stone is forsaken, until it dries like marrow in the wind, this world

has its orphans, exposing all blessings mercilessly, but who understands best?  
all those who have stood on their mother's hands will finally die from birth

## Chinese test

无力到达的地方太多了，脚在疼痛，母亲，你没有教会我在贪婪的朝霞中染上古老的哀愁。我的心只像你

你是我的母亲，我甚至是你的血液在黎明流出的血泊中使你惊讶地看到你自己，你使我醒来

听到这世界的声音，你让我生下来，你让我与不幸构成这世界的可怕的双胞胎。多年来，我已记不得今夜的哭声

那使你受孕的光芒，来得多么遥远，多么可疑，站在生与死之间，你的眼睛拥有黑暗而进入脚底的阴影何等沉重

在你怀抱之中，我曾露出谜底似的笑容，有谁知道你让我以童贞方式领悟一切，但我却无动于衷

我把这世界当作处女，难道我对着你发出的爽朗的笑声没有燃烧起足够的夏季吗？没有？

我被遗弃在世上，只身一人，太阳的光线悲哀地笼罩着我，当你俯身世界时是否知道你遗落了什么？

岁月把我放在磨子里，让我亲眼看见自己被碾碎呵，母亲，当我终于变得沉默，你是否为之欣喜

没有人知道我是怎样不着边际地爱你，这秘密来自你的一部分，我的眼睛像两个伤口痛苦地望着你

活着为了活着，我自取灭亡，以对抗亘古已久的爱一块石头被抛弃，直到像骨髓一样风干，这世界

有了孤儿，使一切祝福暴露无遗，然而谁最清楚凡在母亲手上站过的人，终会因诞生而死去

# PHOTOGRAPH

## English test

in it:

a man has just finished  
his promiscuous game today  
he has thrown out half a dozen condoms  
he relies on them the way  
he relies on his own toys  
he relies on them the way  
women rely on their high-heeled boots

on the back:

a man in the dark  
fondles his old age appreciatively he believes  
the tabloid data that ever increasing  
sexual potency makes his hair stand erect  
and so for the sake of statistics  
his only choice is to feel like a young man again

lighting a cigarette

I place the photograph in a drawer  
now I continue to manipulate  
that naked blue body  
his muscles (built recently)  
grips tightly that hand which digs into it  
his skin (again washed)  
casts off the skins east and western within  
my spleen and my stomach  
sniff at his cheap eau de toilette  
my shutter, however, is unwilling  
this goes to show: your fade ins and fade outs  
have nothing to do with me

at any time he is prepared to pounce  
penetrating that piece of glass  
to become my thin pancake

## Chinese test

从正面看:

一个男孩刚结束  
他的轻薄游戏 今天  
他已扔掉半打避孕套  
他依赖它们 象  
依赖自己的玩具  
他依赖它们 象  
女人依赖她们的高统靴

从背面看:

一个男人 在暗处  
把玩暮年 他相信  
小报的数据 那日益高涨的  
性能力 让他毛发直竖  
看在统计学的份上  
他只能返老还童

点燃一根香烟  
我把照片放进抽屉  
现在 我继续摆弄  
那个蓝色裸体  
他的肌肉 (刚锻炼过)  
掐紧挖他的那手  
他的皮肤 (又洗过)  
扔掉了里面的东西 皮肤  
我的脾和胃  
嗅嗅他的低级香水  
我的快门却不愿意  
这表明: 你的淡入淡出  
不关我的事情

随时 他准备扑上去  
钻进那个玻璃片内  
变成我的薄饼



# THE BLACK ROOM

## English test

all crows are black-hearted  
I'm feeling timid: they have so many  
relatives, the numbers are with them, irresistible

however, we four sisters are indispensable  
we are the snare in the black room  
slim and graceful, back and forth we pace  
looking as if victory were within our grasp  
yet I play dirty tricks, I am mean inside  
while on the surface maintaining a girl's good temper  
walking the same old road to defeat each day

unmarried denizens of the boudoir, we are maidens of a reputable family  
smiling resentfully, racking our brains  
to give ourselves new airs and graces  
young, beautiful, like raging fires  
cooking up black and single-minded traps  
(those who have crossed borders and schemed meticulously  
those with sharpened teeth and bolt upright vision  
does that face devoid of undulations belong to the husband of my elder  
sister?)

at night, I sense  
danger lurking in our room  
cats and mice wake  
we go to sleep, searching in dreams for strange  
house numbers, at night  
we are ripe, ready to be settled  
husbands confounded with wives, and so on and so forth  
we four sisters change with each passing day  
marriage is still centred on choosing a spouse  
the light in the bedroom makes the newlyweds downcast  
put it all on the line, I say to myself  
home is the place to set out from

## Chinese test

天下乌鸦一般黑  
我感到胆怯，它们有如此多的  
亲戚，它们人多势众，难以抗拒

我们却必不可少，我们姐妹四人  
我们是黑色房间里的圈套  
亭亭玉立，来回踱步  
胜券在握的模样  
我却有使坏，内心刻薄  
表面保持当女儿的好脾气  
重蹈每天的失败

待字闺中，我们是名门淑女  
悻悻地微笑，挖空心思  
使自己变得多姿多彩  
年轻、美貌，如火如荼  
炮制很黑、很专心的圈套  
(那些越过边境、精心策划的人  
牙齿磨利、眼光笔直的好人  
毫无起伏的面容是我的姐夫?)

在夜晚，我感到  
我们的房间危机四伏  
猫和老鼠都醒着  
我们去睡，在梦中寻找陌生的  
门牌号码，在夜晚  
我们是瓜熟蒂落的女人  
颠鸾倒凤，如此等等  
我们姐妹四人，我们日新月异  
婚姻，依然是择偶的中心  
卧室的光线使新婚夫妇沮丧  
孤注一掷，我对自己说  
家是出发的地方

# THE DEATH OF DIANA

## English test

I've written several lines not quite to the point  
on the princess

time is a second-rate it is only in yesterdays  
the princess can die and be crushed

by matter packed into one instant  
her death obliterates her obscure enemy  
—youth, everything

begins from this moment, just as a butterfly  
is more beautiful pinned and mounted

the princess is dead a vulgar dream  
tails the blood component of youth  
with nowhere to go vulgar lovers will  
wonder at her living morbid fear of dirt  
and be scared witless by her dying

the princess' death calls to my mind  
those close-set typefaces  
the manufacturers and an innate quality of beauty  
took direct aim at a life they (the typefaces)  
fell with a crash and buried  
an entire evening  
should I mourn for her? of course  
and at the same time I think that it could  
get to the point where I cannot make my own ends meet  
so I smile and say good-bye to  
a case of cancer and  
a car crash

## Chinese test

关于公主 我写过若干  
不切题的诗句  
一个二流岁月 公主只能  
在昨日死去 并被  
物捣烂 装进瞬间  
她的死 消失了她暗中的敌人  
——青春，一切都从  
这一刻开始，就如一只蝴蝶  
它的标本比它更美丽

公主死了 低级的梦  
尾随青春的血小板  
无处可栖 低级情人将  
疑心她 活着的洁癖  
并被她的死吓破胆

公主 死 使我回忆起  
那些密密麻麻的铅字  
制造者和天生丽质  
击中了一个生命 它们（铅字）  
轰然落下 埋葬了  
一个夜晚  
我该为她哀悼？当然  
同时想想自己的账单  
也会变得 入不敷出  
于是我微笑 告别  
一个癌症和  
一次车祸

# THE LIGHTLY INJURED

## English test

here come the lightly injured  
gauze white as their white faces  
their wounds sewn up more neatly than the war  
here come they come  
carrying the things they cherish  
parts that have not died  
they strip off their uniforms they wash themselves  
and use cheques and credit cards

the heavily wounded city seethes with energy  
its pulse its temperature rises and falls  
faster than war  
slower than terror  
the heavily wounded city  
dispenses with artificial legs and bandages  
now it bleeds a green secretion  
it provides an all-powerful power of stone  
one of the lightly injured lifts up his head  
to take a look at those aesthetical constructions

six thousand bombs come crashing down  
they leave an arms depot in flames  
six thousand bombs burn  
like six thousand heavily wounded eyes  
hastily lighting up the faces  
of those thousands of women with husbands  
of men with wives of unmarried men and women  
sulphur asphalt cover their bodies  
at their feet, tangled rigid frames

a heavily wounded map in hand  
the lightly injured from this moment on  
go separately in search of those  
new vessel buildings  
thin forms, light forms and pointed  
the neck of this city  
now stretches out sharply:  
a cinch to slice through  
and scaring off a good many cuts

# THIRST

## English test

tonight all the light is shining for you  
tonight you are a small colony  
that remains for a long time, melancholy seeping  
from your body, with exquisite drops of water

the moon is like a clean, fragrant body  
sound asleep, it gives off a seductive smell  
a night is pressed on either side by two days  
between them all, the dark circles around your eyes  
stay joyful

what kind of clamour is piled up into your body?  
inconsolable, one feels some substance taking shape  
the walls in dreams blacken  
so that you see traces of triangular overflow  
the pores of the whole body open  
ungraspable meaning  
stars in the night sky shine with inhuman shine  
while your eyes are loaded with  
the sadness and content of remote antiquity

and with them the agony of satisfaction  
as you look on gracefully, the power of a demon  
makes of this moment an indelible memory

## Chinese test

今晚所有的光只为你照亮  
今晚你是一小块殖民地  
久久停留，忧郁从你身体内  
渗出，带着细腻的水滴

月亮像一团光洁芬芳的肉体  
酣睡，发出诱人的气息  
两个白昼夹着一个夜晚  
在它们之间，你黑色眼圈  
保持着欣喜

怎样的喧嚣堆积成我的身体  
无法安慰，感到有某种物体将形成  
梦中的墙壁发黑  
使你看见三角形泛滥的影子  
全身每个毛孔都张开  
不可捉摸的意义  
星星在夜空毫无人性地闪耀  
而你的眼睛装满  
来自远古的悲哀和快意

带着心满意足的创痛  
你优美的注视中，有着恶魔的力量  
使这一刻，成为无法抹掉的记忆

# L'AMORE HA MOLTE FACCE

## TRADUZIONE INEDITA

L'amore ha molte facce.

La faccia da sbronzo quella sì  
che è grande come tutta la vita  
può contenere un sacco d'alcolizzati  
può far salire una marea sempre  
più su fino alle orbite fino a tutti  
i tratti del viso e liquidare il tempo  
non sarebbe né la prima né l'ultima volta  
e ciò fa impallidire perfino il silenzio  
A ogni modo una simile faccia intimorisce  
come quella roba che uno chiama amore  
il cielo si crivella se colpito dalle pallottole  
scintilla come un tragico teatro di guerra  
tornano i fuochi nel 12° mese alla frontiera  
l'allarme dei fuochi sui monti l'amore portato  
all'estremo uomini e donne che piangono  
se danzano e battono le mani sul muro e sanno  
che il mondo non sarà più forte come prima  
La faccia da spergiuoro  
tradisce l'amore non desiderato  
tradisce un sistema che stride  
e stride perché dentro e fuori tutto vorrebbe  
spezzarsi  
tutto vorrebbe  
crollare ma alla fine tutto vorrebbe ancora  
funzionare così arriva la disperazione una scossa.

La faccia da furbo matricolato  
chi se ne frega se si tratta d'una bassa  
perversione o d'una perversione mentale  
fatto sta che è frontale tenera e consunta  
tutte le cose più frustrate finiscono per consumarti  
e così inizia a divorare il tempo la disperazione  
si è fatta tanto perfetta da prendere tutte  
le cellule impazzite e generare batteri capaci  
se non di contagiarti almeno di autocontagiarsi  
L'amore ha molte facce  
ma mi siedo tutta brilla al bancone d'un bar  
e guardo gli uomini e le donne sedersi  
tutti insieme e piangere con tutto il corpo  
col viso intermittente di luci tutti i giorni  
Il mio marito e la mia figliola  
e c'è pure quel mio caro amico  
e tutti mi si son nascosti dietro  
mi guardano se con un piccolo coltello pelo  
una pera e io divento a ogni taglio quel coltello  
loro tremano una sola volta e io a ogni taglio  
una sola volta attorno a un suono che stride  
ai miei occhi sempre più tristi e così pelo  
una pera fino in fondo e me la sgrano

# THE REASONS FOR HER VICTORY

She won the international prize “Piero Bigongiari” for that rhapsodic way that her thought "trigger the energy of poetry" to the force that her poetry to bring forth the future into the past, this time suspending disbelief in a restless, alarming amazement. Poetry is a constant state of alert because present is to open patches of future in the past. Zhai's poetry live from the obsessive thought of a impending war and the relentless interrogation of a myth, the one for which poetry and painting spring from a common source. The submarine is the central image for Zhai's poetry, and stands in the name of "freedom from thought." Zhai is able to make us feel glimpses of silence within the interstices of the images, to capture sparking and the vibration of truth. Finally the poet records the hot and cold parts of his body into fragments: her poetry has the same liquid consistency of the images of a tomography.



LICEO SCIENTIFICO "AMEDEO DI SAVOIA" PISTOIA 

Alberto Bettini

Valentina Spinelli

Chiara Vezzosi

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