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# League of Canadian Poets

PRIMARY MENU

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## A World of Poetry: Life and Truth

By Anna Yin

*for National Poetry Month, April 2020*

When I was a kid, like others in China, I was taught to recite Chinese traditional poetry. I didn't understand why and thought it was just for the culture and language. When a teenage, I occasionally wrote poems in Chinese but forgot them all, well, they were not good and didn't mean much. However, after I immigrated to Canada, three year later, in 2003, one night after busy IT work and family chores, I read The Emperor's New Clothes to my son, a poem came to me. In the poem, I saw a child turn to me asking "Who are you?", ...a sadness hit me... I found I was lost, lost in life. I wonder why I couldn't make a life instead of just making a living. Poetry awakened me and shed light through like an ajar door through which I could see my lost self. Soon I became child-like eagerly exploring poetry and I saw a whole world there, a world of imagination without limitation. I found beauty in our daily life and wrote about it, I felt suffering in others and wrote about it. Poetry brought compassion, love and healings. Not long after I joined Ontario Poetry Society and also built a Chinese Literary online forum with other poetry friends to share poetry and discuss writing. It became an online world of poetry for us and we found life more meaningful in this way.

In 2004, a tragedy happened in Great Toronto Area, a 10-year-old Chinese girl was kidnapped and murdered. The news shocked me and I soon wrote a poem: Toronto, No More Weeping. In this poem, I mourned for the girl and called for hope and peace. I think it expressed the feelings of many others, it won an award and CBC radio broadcast it in 2005. Local Chinese media also asked me to translate the poem to commemorate the victim and denounce crimes. I was glad that my poem was helpful cross-culturally. I became more passionate in poetry. In 2010, I designed Poetry Alive workshops to share the beauty, the meaning and the power of poetry at schools and libraries. Like Rumi said: “Not only the thirsty seek the water, the water as well seeks the thirsty.” Poetry found me and made me new, and in return, I want my poetry alive workshops to help others. In 2011, I joined the League of Canadian Poets and was glad to host many readings to promote poetry.

In 2013, the **World Poetry** founder Ariadne Sawyer invited me to read my poems in Vancouver. In her email she said “I have some news for you. There is an interesting story about your gift poem.” The poem she referred to is a tribute poem to LiPo the great Chinese poet for their world poetry project. I wondered what story she wanted to reveal. **At the poetry reading night in New Westminster library** (B.C.), Ariadne shared the story. She said that one lady called her to ask her to thank me because my poem “**After Reading Ted Hughes’ ‘Full Moon and Little Frieda’**” saved her life. She said that a few years ago she felt depressed and wanted to commit suicide, one day she wandered in a library and saw my poem on the wall. She read it and changed her mind. I was really happy to hear the story. It reminded me of Emily Dickinson’s poem:

”

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
 I shall not live in vain;  
 If I can ease one life the aching,  
 Or cool one pain,  
 Or help one fainting robin  
 Unto his nest again,  
 I shall not live in vain.

When I traveled back to China the same year, Ms. Tang, a reporter From Chinese Government TV Station interviewed me, I told her the story. She asked me: “How did your poem save her? What is her name?” I said: “I don’t know.”

And how did the poem save her? Here I share the poem. Please feel free to leave your comments.



### After Reading Ted Hughes’ “Full Moon and Little Frieda”

I fall in love with you, Moon,  
seeing you step back like a timid artist.

Listening to the night,  
you come out; a pail lifted.

Moon, they are gone.

They left you watching over the river.

How many years since?

And you watch the small village

becoming a floating island.

Among rows of windows,

the night flows, and I’m wide awake.

How much I want to imitate Li Po,

dancing with his white sleeves,  
a humming from his burning heart,  
night after night inviting you for a drink!  
The wine never drained,  
yet he drowned in the silver river.

Moon, lift your bucket,  
come out once more.  
I won't make a sound.



读特德修斯的月亮

月亮，我坠入了你的爱河。  
看着你好似羞涩的艺术家  
退回到夜幕里。  
聆听着秋夜，你悄然  
出来，手里拎着一个圆桶。

月亮，他们都已离去。  
独留下你照看着  
夜色里的长河。  
多少年过去了？  
你看着小小的村庄  
成为漂浮的岛屿。  
在行行的窗户之间，  
黑夜流动，而我难以成寐。

我多想模仿李白，  
依着他的长衫漫舞，  
伴着燃烧的心轻唱。  
每晚都来邀请你共饮。  
美酒不会干涸，  
而李白沉没在银色的河水中，  
再也不见身影。

月亮，提起你的圆桶，  
再一次出来吧，  
我会安静得不弄出半点声响。

Watch when Ariadne Sawyer shared this story:

**Anna Yin reads in Vancouver at World Poetr...**



I must say I never knew I would be a poet, neither did my family nor anyone else. As Picasso said “It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child.” Since the child in me has awakened, I see my life differently, I see the world differently. Most importantly I see truth in poetry, and I write truth through poetry, sometimes unconsciously, other time “telling it in slant”. These truths speak to many others, once a radio host told me that my poem “My

Accent” brought her tears. An immigrant who is a polish filmmaker told me that she wanted to make a short film of it. My poem “My Father’s Temple” on the other hand tackles the pain of hometown’s modernizing. But as shy as my father is, he doesn’t want the poem published while my friends in hometown try to take photos of the lonely house in ruins. Then my longer poem with seven sections from *Seven Nights with the Chinese Zodiac* puzzled some readers as sometimes truth is too complex to tell. All of my poems are based on true stories and authentic feelings. They have accumulated to fill five poetry collections besides my busy IT work. I know I need these two languages: computer language and poetic language. As others say I made a good living as IT professional but through poetry I made a good life.

Life is rich. During these years I have also initiated several cultural exchange projects to bring the world of poetry together for both East and West. One of them is translating other poets’ works. It amazes me that we are all so different, yet also alike. Each poem can lead to another interesting world. And these worlds call us to enter, to explore and to exchange. Last summer I visited Italy and when lining up at **St. Peter’s Square**, I thought of **Richard Greene**’s poem with similar experience, then with a better understanding I revised my translation. After translating **A.F. Moritz**’s poems, I wrote my own poems about We are the Child.

Now I have translated works by 50 poets from USA, Canada and China. I am glad that the collection “Mirrors and Windows” will be published in 2021 by **Guernica Editions**.

In 2019 Michigan State University Press published *Undocumented: Great Lakes Poets Laureate on Social Justice*, as one of 68 contributors from North America, we wrote about many similar and different issues that are happening every day. Ron Riecki (the book Editor) from USA has organized 70 reading events and brought us together to spread these truths across the border. People gathered to hear and to discuss issues, together we raised our voice and rang the bell. We are glad that a world of poetry is life and truth for everyone without border. Let it bring us hope and unite us!

Anna is also a **Poets in the Schools** participating poet with her *Poetry Alive* Workshops. Schools are currently closed because of COVID-19, so Anna has made her workshops available online. The first workshop is developed for Grades 9-12, but it can also be used for wider groups. Follow her on **Youtube** for more workshops or visit **Poetry Alive**.

### Anna Yin's Online Poetry Alive Workshops 2...



**Anna Yin** was **Mississauga's Inaugural Poet Laureate** (2015-2017) and has authored five collections of poetry. Her poems/translations have appeared at *ARC Poetry*, *New York Times*, *China Daily*, CBC Radio, *World Journal* etc. Anna won the 2005 Ted Plantos Memorial Award, two MARTYs, two scholarships from West Chester University Poetry Conference, three grants from OAC and 2013 Professional Achievement Award from CPAC. She performed her poetry on Parliament Hill and has been featured at 2015 Austin International

Poetry Festival and 2017 National poetry month project etc. **[annapoetry.com](http://annapoetry.com)**

Poetry Pause x Biblioasis: Dallas Hunt  
— Cree dictionary

Poetry Pause x Biblioasis: Mallory  
Tater — Flattering



The League of Canadian Poets gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund, the Ontario Arts Council, the Toronto Arts Council, and all our friends of poetry. © League of Canadian Poets

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