

A Review of Anna Yin's *Seven Nights with the Chinese Zodiac* on Maple Tree Literary Supplement, reviewed by George Elliott Clarke (2015)

Anna Yin hails from Nanjing, China. Immigrating to Canada in 1999, she is now the inaugural Poet Laureate of Mississauga, Ontario. Born in Chongqing, China, Chuan Sha studied in England, then came to Canada in 1999. Settled in Scarborough, Ontario, his poetry has international appeal.

Yin's sixth verse collection is *Seven Nights with the Chinese Zodiac*. She'd planned to write a book titled, "The Year of the Snake," for 2013 was a year of faith-testing crises. However, other Chinese astrological fauna came to mind, resulting in a more expansive work. Indeed, Yin is the poet as seer. Her models are other bards with an eccentric and/or imagist bent: Anna Akhmatova, Basho, Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, William Carlos Williams....

She also shadows Sylvia Plath: "Someone from our childhood mistook me for you— / his apology blew me back into midnight." A friend has become une-dame-de-la-nuit: "You drifted away into a night lake— / with feathers blackened by dark lust, / with slim neck hooked by golden bait." In another poem, the speaker says, "You are tired of his / molding, over and over, / thrashing, nailing / into you." There's a fierce feminism here, reinforced by readings of Dot Livesay and Dame Atwood. Though it's tricky following Yin's wicked, impressionistic juxtapositions, her painterly imagery is deliciously lustrous.

See her haiku poems: "you stare at a white house..." / white smoke lingers / among white-framed windows"; "recalling a poem / his shadow and mine expand / on Brooklyn Bridge." Do not ignore her acute aphorisms: "Death. What is it like? / No one takes a close look."

Yin is endlessly perspicacious, endlessly compelling: "The autumn gusts feel warm / as if it's spring... / last night by accident I cut my finger... / slowly, on the rice paper, red roses grew." She brings to Canadian poetry a sense of classicism and aestheticism and minimalism, all nicely mixed up with sensuality.

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