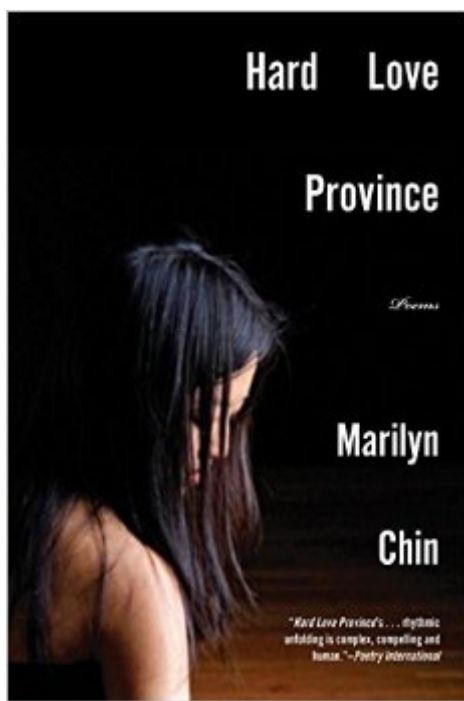


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Hard Love Province: Poems



Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 Anisfield-Wolf Prize for Poetry From a poet of "dazzling longing" (Los Angeles Times), a stunning new collection of haunting elegies and playful quatrains. Marilyn Chin is a poet acclaimed by Adrienne Rich for her "powerful, uncompromised, and unerring" poems. Dancing brilliantly between Eastern and Western forms, fusing ancient Chinese history and contemporary American popular culture, she is one of the most celebrated Asian-American poets writing today. Chin's fourth volume of poems, *Hard Love Province*, is composed of erotic elegies in which the speaker grieves for the loss of her beloved. In "Void" she writes with the imagistic, distilled quietude of a solitary mourner: "It's not that you are rare / Nor are you extraordinary // O lone wren sobbing on the bodhi tree / You are simple and sincere." In "Formosan Elegy," by contrast, she is that mourner, beyond simplicity or quietude, crying out for a lover: "I sing for you but my tears have dried in my gullet / Walk the old dog give the budgies a cool bath / Cut a tender melon let it bleed into memory." Here, too, are poems inspired by Chin's poetic forbearers and mentors—Dickinson, Plath, Ai, Gwendolyn Brooks, Tu Fu, Adrienne Rich, and others—honoring their work and decrying the global injustice they addressed. "Whose life is it anyway?" she asks in a poem for Rich, "She born of chrysalis and shit / Or she born of woman and pain?" Emotionally nuanced and electric with high-flying verbal experimentation, image after image, line by line, Chin's spectacular reinventions, her quatrains, sonnets, allegories, and elegies, are unforgettable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The title jacket of *Hard Love Province* suggests that the book is a collection of erotic elegies, •

but perhaps the work is better considered as a fresh, bold take on love and loss through the eyes of the modern Asian-American female. Consider *erotic* as a healthy statement of Asian-American female power and beauty (synonymous, even) amidst today's larger American societal landscape. There is a nod to the old Chinese stories, of tradition subverted yet no less true; "During the tenth month of the first year of the reign of / Emperor Jing, a little girl from the southernmost province of / Guangdong grew horns" and later, "Centuries of chaos and pogroms followed" (in *Horns: A Coda*). Horns of the strong assertive, powerful female "of horny women" are encompassed, insinuated, and transcended in the larger telling of this work. The woman is fierce, wild; Chin writes, "your fresh lovers / O how you wear them like nipple rings" in *Kalifornia* (A portrait of the poet wearing a girdle of severed heads). Perhaps the larger question beyond the question of eroticism is whether the reader is ready "the grown woman speaker voice, what she will say, this is a love story, this is her home." Home is a home away from home, she writes in *Alba: Moon Camellia Lover*, which is dedicated to her late partner "and deftly moves to a universal sense of elegy" for Charles, for Adrienne Rich, for Gwendolyn Brooks, even unnamed.

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