



Crazy Melon and Chinese Apple: The Poems of Frances Chung (Wesleyan Poetry Series)

Frances Chung

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Frances Chung's poetry stands alone as the most perceptive, aesthetically accomplished, and compassionate depiction of a supposedly impenetrable community during the late 1960s and 70s. Written "For the Chinatown People" and imprinted with Chung's own ink seal, *Crazy Melon* is collects brief poems and prose vignettes set in New York's Chinatown and Lower East Side. Chung incorporates Spanish and Chinese into her English in deft evocations of these neighborhoods' streets, fantasies, commerce, and toil. The title of her second collection, *Chinese Apple*, translates the Chinese word for pomegranate: there she offers "small crimson bites" of new themes and cityscapes -- delightfully understated eroticism, tributes to other poets, impressions of other Chinese diasporic communities during her travels in Central America and Asia. Its new formal experiments show that Chung's poetic prowess continued to deepen before her early death.

Publication of these two works will finally allow Chung's growing circle of admirers to experience the full range of her skills and sensibility, and will draw many others into that circle. Her poems are an inimitable synthesis of American urban vernacular and imagery, various East Asian and Spanish-language poetics, and a concern for ethnic and feminist cultural and political survival-in-writing that was so vital to American poets around the time that Chung first began to compose. Her always fresh perspective on the worlds around her smoothly shifts through multiple lenses, making wonderful use of her "power to dream in four languages."



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