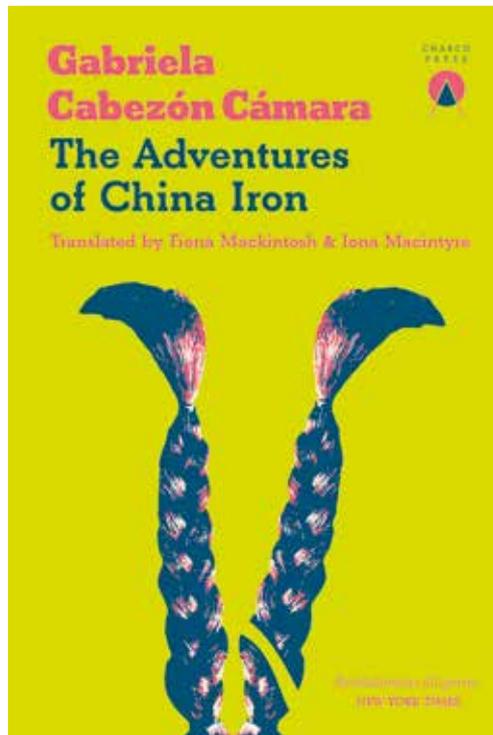


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# Readers' Guide



## The Adventures of China Iron

### Gabriela Cabezón Cámara

Translated by Iona Macintyre  
and Fiona Mackintosh

Charco Press

Other novels by Gabriela Cabezón Cámara  
*Slum Virgin* (2009)

[thebookerprizes.com](http://thebookerprizes.com)

## About the author

Gabriela Cabezón Cámara was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in November 1968. She is one of the leading figures in Argentinian and Latin American literature and one of the region's most prominent feminist intellectuals. In 2011 her novella *Le viste la cara a Dios (You've Seen God's Face)*, later republished as a graphic novel, won the Argentine Senate's Alfredo Palacios Prize and was recognised by the Congress of Buenos Aires Province for its cultural significance and its vital contribution in the fight against human trafficking. In 2013 she was writer-in-residence at University of California, Berkeley. Her debut novel *La virgen cabeza (Slum Virgin)*, Charco Press, 2017) was finalist for the Silverio Cañada Prize of Gijón's 'Semana Negra' (Spain) and it was followed by three novels and two collection of short stories. She lives in Buenos Aires.

## About the translators

Iona Macintyre was born in New Haven, USA, in May 1977. She is a Senior Lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Macintyre's teaching and research has focused on 19th-century Spanish American history and culture. Within this area she works primarily on Argentina, the history of the book, translation studies, gender studies and transatlantic relations. She lives in Edinburgh, UK.

Fiona Mackintosh was born in Northampton, UK, in November 1970. She is a Senior Lecturer in Latin American Literature at the University of Edinburgh with research interests in gender studies, comparative literature and literary translation. Mackintosh specialises in Argentinian fiction and poetry and has published extensively on Alejandra Pizarnik and Silvina Ocampo. She is currently writing a book on the novels of Claudia Piñeiro. She lives in Edinburgh, UK.

## About the book

1872. The pampas of Argentina. China is a young woman eking out an existence in a remote gaucho encampment. After her no-good husband is conscripted into the army, China bolts for freedom, setting off on a wagon journey through the pampas in the company of her new-found friend Liz, a settler from Scotland. While Liz provides China with a sentimental education and schools her in the nefarious ways of the British Empire, their eyes are opened to the wonders of Argentina's richly diverse flora and fauna, cultures and languages, as well as to the ruthless violence involved in nation-building.

This subversive retelling of Argentina's foundational gaucho epic, *Marín Fierro*, is a celebration of the colour and movement of the living world, the open road, love and sex, and the dream of lasting

freedom. With humour and sophistication, Gabriela Cabezón Cámara has created a joyful, hallucinatory novel that is also an incisive critique of national origin myths and of the casualties of ruthless progress.

## What the judges thought

'A feminist reading of 19th-century foundational myths, the brutality and beauty of rediscovering an already devastated world. This must have posed an enormous challenge to the translators, one they have faced with inventiveness and poise.'

## Discussion points

The novel makes numerous references to the Industrial Revolution taking place in Britain. How does Cámara portray its influence and that of Europe more widely on Argentina?

What is the significance of Argentina's native wildlife in the novel?

How are gender and sexuality explored?

What is the effect of the novel's graphic depictions of sex and sexual violence?

How does the protagonists' new way of life depicted at the end of the novel compare to that of 1870s Britain? Do you think it is a sustainable lifestyle?

## Themed reading

*The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende  
*The Awakening* by Kate Chopin  
*Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys  
*The Stubborn Archivist* by Yara Rodrigues Fowler

## Useful links

<https://booksandbao.com/2019/11/20/review-the-adventures-of-china-iron-by-gabriela-cabezon-camara/>

<https://clairemca.wordpress.com/tag/the-adventures-of-china-iron/>

<http://lonesomereader.com/blog/2020/3/15/the-adventures-of-china-iron-by-gabriela-cabezon-camara-translated-by-fiona-mackintosh-amp-iona-macintyre>

<https://contemporaryargentinewriters.wordpress.com/2015/11/24/does-not-kill-by-gabriela-cabezon-camara-2/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1k6GtuEvE0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD8i-8ydzSg>

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