

**OLIPHANT, Dave. Maria's poems. Prickly Pear, TX, 1987. 110p 13.95**

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Winner of the Austin Book Award for 1987, *Maria's Poems* is divided into three sections: a sequence detailing a husband-and-wife (the Maria of the book's title) relationship; an eclectic gathering; and a sequence of memories of various Texas towns and cities. Oliphant's voice is colloquial, a befitting strategy for poems that often address his wife or friends; at the same time, though, he risks private references that distance the reader (one feels sometimes that it might be helpful to live around Austin, Texas, to understand him more deeply). This is not to say that he does not have strengths, however. He is best when he writes about Maria, her garden, and the give-and-take of the husband-wife relationship and when he controls his predilection for accumulating imagistic details. Handsomely produced, the book is recommended for larger collections of contemporary American poetry.—*B. Galvin, Central Connecticut State University*