



Ovid's Heroines

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Ovid's *Heroides*, written in Rome some time between 25 and 16 BC, was once his most popular work. The title translates as *Heroines*. It is a series of poems in the voices of women from Greek and Roman myth - including Phaedra, Medea, Penelope and Ariadne - addressed to the men they love. Claimed as both the first book of dramatic monologues and the first of epistolary fiction, *Heroines* is also a radical text in its literary transvestism, and in presenting the same story from often very different, subjective perspectives. For a long time it was Ovid's most influential work, loved by Chaucer, Dante, Marlowe, Shakespeare and Donne, and translated by Dryden and Pope. Clare Pollard's new translation rediscovers Ovid's *Heroines* for the 21st century, with a cast of women who are brave, bitchy, sexy, suicidal, horrifying, heartbreaking and surprisingly modern. Two of the most popular poetry books of recent times have been Ted Hughes's new version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife*, dramatic monologues by women from myth and history giving their side of the story. Clare Pollard's new take on Ovid's *Heroines* is another book in that vein, bringing classic tales to life for modern readers. 'In many ways Pollard, a wunderkind who wrote her first poetry collection while still at school, is a good match for the equally precocious Ovid... these are lively versions, seasoned with both agony and irony, reanimating Ovid's originals' - Josephine Balmer, *The Times*. 'Ovid died in exile, booted out of Rome for what he described as *carmen et error* - a poem and a mistake. These letters remind us that he, of all Latin love poets, understood the plight of the person left behind, waiting for news. He knew that even bad news was less excruciating than no news. And this breezy, witty translation should give new readers the chance to share this understanding' - Natalie Haynes, *The Guardian*.

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