



Ovid's Erotic Poems: "Amores" and "Ars Amatoria"

Publius Ovidius Naso

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The most sophisticated and daring poetic ironist of the early Roman Empire, Publius Ovidius Naso, is perhaps best known for his oft-imitated *Metamorphoses*. But the Roman poet also wrote lively and lewd verse on the subjects of love, sex, marriage, and adultery—a playful parody of the earnest erotic poetry traditions established by his literary ancestors. The *Amores*, Ovid's first completed book of poetry, explores the conventional mode of erotic elegy with some subversive and silly twists: the poetic narrator sets up a lyrical altar to an unattainable woman only to knock it down by poking fun at her imperfections. *Ars Amatoria* takes the form of didactic verse in which a purportedly mature and experienced narrator instructs men and women alike on how to best play their hands at the long con of love.

Ovid's Erotic Poems offers a modern English translation of the *Amores* and *Ars Amatoria* that retains the irreverent wit and verve of the original. Award-winning poet Len Krisak captures the music of Ovid's richly textured Latin meters through rhyming couplets that render the verse as playful and agile as it was meant to be. Sophisticated, satirical, and wildly self-referential, *Ovid's Erotic Poems* is not just a wickedly funny send-up of romantic and sexual mores but also a sharp critique of literary technique and poetic convention.

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