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I, Clodia, and Other Portraits

Anna Jackson



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"I, Clodia" is the story of Clodia Metelli—poet and lover—and her relations with her far-away paramour Catullus, her husband Metellus Celer, her brother Publius Clodius, and her accuser Cicero. By giving Clodia—the "Lesbia" of Catullus's famous love poetry—her own first-person narration, Anna Jackson upends and reinvigorates the beloved classical sequence with biting wit and tender attention. Who was Clodia and what did she think about the affair, the gossip, the scandal, the poems? Jackson honors and subverts her source material in lines that are a marvel of ventriloquism. The book's second section, "The Photographer's Secret," furthers this superb exploration of voice and portrayal. The photographer in this sequence reads, writes, gives presents, and considers the art of portraiture. But who is examining, and who is being examined? Above all else, Anna Jackson takes us within and without a range of characters in her characteristically witty style—sometimes mock breathless, sometimes dryly pointed, and always clever, stylish, and emotionally engaging.

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