



# Medea's Chorus: Myth and Women's Poetry Since 1950 (Studies in Modern Poetry)

*Veronica House*

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Women's mythic revision is a tradition at the heart of twentieth-century literature. *Medea's Chorus* explores post-WWII women's poetry that takes Greek mythology as its central topos. The book investigates five of the most influential poets writing in the twentieth century (H.D., Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, Margaret Atwood, Eavan Boland) who challenge both the ancient literary representations of women and the high modernist appropriations of the classics. In their poetry and prose, the women engage with cultural discourses about literary authority, gender, oppression, violence, and age. Yet even while the poets rework certain aspects of the Greek myths that they find troubling, they see the inherent power in the stories and use that power for personal and social revelation. Because myths exist in multiple versions, ancient writers did not create from scratch; their artistic contribution lay in how they changed the stories. Modern female poets are engaging in a several millennia-old tradition of mythic revision, a tradition that has ruthlessly posited that there is no place for women in the creation and transmission of mythological poetry. *Medea's Chorus* tracks mythic revision from the 1950s through the second-wave feminist movement and into turn-of-the-century feminism to highlight individual achievements and to show the collective effect of the poets' highly varied works on post-WWII literature and feminist thought and practice. This engaging and beautifully written book is a must-read for any student, teacher, or scholar of the Classical Tradition, revisionist mythmaking, and twentieth-century poetry.

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