

Many children from the late nineteenth century to the present day have first encountered classical antiquity either in anthologies of myth such as Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book* or in historical novels set in ancient Greece or in Rome and its Empire, from G.A. Henty's 1893 *Beric the Briton* to the currently popular "Roman Mysteries" series by Caroline Lawrence. These works of historical fiction for young readers engage in a double construction of the past by the present: of childhood from the point of view of adulthood and of antiquity from the point of view of the writer's own day. Critical attention has in recent years focused primarily on British writers (such as Henty, Kipling, and Rosemary Sutcliff), and in particular on their representation of Roman Britain and the Roman Empire as a response to and commentary on imperial and post-imperial Britain.

There are, however, a number of historical novels for children set in antiquity written not from a British but from an American perspective, and while they share many elements with their British analogues, they often give a specifically American inflection to their treatment of the past. This is evident especially in their deployment of the themes of center and margin, of home city and colony. In this paper we explore the treatment of these themes as reflections of American concerns by two writers of the early twentieth century, Paul L. Anderson (1880-1956) and Caroline Dale Snedeker (1871-1956), with particular attention to the treatment of Roman Britain as a version of the New World in Lewis's *Swords in the North* (1938) and Snedeker's *The White Isle* (1940).

Anderson's novels, set in Rome, Roman Gaul, and Britain, fall into the mode of the "boy's story," and reflect a familiar tension in fictions of the Roman Empire between admiration of Rome (and of Julius Caesar in particular) and sympathy for those freedom-loving peoples subjugated or enslaved by Rome. His *Swords in the North* evokes the idea of the New World by an episode that recalls the rescue of John Smith by Pocahontas and describes the goals of Caesar's conquests in terms that call to mind the settlement of the American frontier. In Snedeker's fiction, especially three novels that feature female protagonists and offer a modern view of ancient history for girls, an intellectually open Athens is (predictably) the antitype to Sparta and a poetry-loving Greece the antitype to Rome, but none of these old established powers allows the fullest freedom, something that is only to be found in the geographical periphery, in new institutions, or in the inner life of family and individual. In its depiction of an England free from Rome's faults and of a loving and non-hierarchical Christian community, *The White Isle* draws on a vision of America as the locus of utopian settlements like that of New Harmony, Indiana, founded by Snedeker's great uncle Robert Owen.