

This paper will explore the roles of historical fiction and fictionalized history in the classical education of girls in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century England and America. We will argue that limitations on the lives of girls, and on their access to education, in both the ancient and the modern periods were reflected in the prominent place of fiction in accounts of ancient history by women and for girls; as a result, these works represent a distinctive and illuminating instance of the interconnections between fiction and historical writing.

In the first section of the paper, we will draw on accounts of girls' reading by writers including Virginia Woolf and Naomi Mitchison to delineate girls' exclusion from traditional education and their more informal and imaginative encounters with the classical past, often through translations or works for children. A principal example will be Mitchison, whose memoirs describe her evasion of both modern and ancient gender limitations in the creation of a fictionalized self to experience the ancient world. "I picked up and began to read *The Republic* and was much taken up with the idea of being a Guardian. This, I know, started off one of my interminable inside stories, interspersed with noble sayings in the manner of Jowett" (Mitchison, *All Change Here: Girlhood and Marriage*, 40).

In her 1997 study, *Gendering Classicism: The Ancient World in Twentieth-Century Women's Historical Fiction*, Ruth Hoberman discusses the ways in which Mitchison and others worked through the conflict between their gender roles and their engagement with the past in fiction for adults. In the second part of our paper, we will look instead at texts by women written for girls or for a child audience that includes girls. We will consider accounts of Greek and Roman history alongside novels and stories set in classical Greece and Rome and Roman Britain to show how the distinction between history and fiction is at once marked and elided in both genres.

The intertwining of history and fiction in these works can be illustrated through a comparison of Dorothy Mills's *The Book of the Ancient Greeks* (1925) and *The Book of the Ancient Romans* (1937), texts written originally for use in a girls' school, with Caroline Dale Snedeker's contemporary novels for girls, *The Perilous Seat* (1923), *The Forgotten Daughter* (1929), and *The White Isle* (1940), which reflect the concern for accuracy typical of much historical fiction. Both Mills and Snedeker seek above all to convey "the Greek spirit" to their largely female readership, and thus face the challenge posed by the restricted lives of Greek women, which calls into question the traditional vision of that spirit as intellectually, physically, and politically liberating. Both respond by deploying fiction to represent ancient girls and women to modern girl readers without undermining the central goals of their narratives. We conclude with the investigation of similar strategies in the fictions of Robert Graves and Naomi Mitchison.