



# Heretical Hellenism: Women Writers, Ancient Greece, and the Victorian Popular Imagination

*Shanyn Fiske*

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The prevailing assumption regarding the Victorians' relationship to ancient Greece is that Greek knowledge constituted an exclusive discourse within elite male domains. *Heretical Hellenism: Women Writers, Ancient Greece, and the Victorian Popular Imagination* challenges that theory and argues that while the information women received from popular sources was fragmentary and often fostered intellectual insecurities, it was precisely the ineffability of the Greek world refracted through popular sources and reconceived through new fields of study that appealed to women writers' imaginations.

Examining underconsidered sources such as theater history and popular journals, Shanyn Fiske uncovers the many ways that women acquired knowledge of Greek literature, history, and philosophy without formal classical training. Through discussions of women writers such as Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Jane Harrison, *Heretical Hellenism* demonstrates that women established the foundations of a heretical challenge to traditional humanist assumptions about the uniformity of classical knowledge and about women's place in literary history.

*Heretical Hellenism* provides a historical rationale for a more expansive definition of classical knowledge and offers an interdisciplinary method for understanding the place of classics both in the nineteenth century and in our own time.

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