

## Constructions of Girlhood in Graeco-Roman Antiquity: Trends, Challenges, Critical Approaches

While numerous studies have illuminated the representations of women and gender in antiquity, the lives of girls, from early childhood to adolescence, remains an elusive category of scholarly research that poses many challenges. This panel seeks to bring to focus critical approaches in studying the constructions of girlhood by discussing current trends that move beyond the presence of girls in ritual activity and family transitions. The papers put together for this panel present case studies that seek to recover from diverse, scattered and fragmentary evidence the lived realities of girls in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. Moreover, the notion of girlhood as an analytical category will be analyzed and discussed as a critical component of contemporary scholarly research but also as a creative element in the study of reception of antiquity. Despite the variety of ancient sources, there are serious gaps between the fictional portrayals of women and their lived realities. As this panel will suggest, mythical representations can offer paradigms of female behavior that can provide more meaning into understanding the ancient emotional world (Paper 1). Representations of girls in antiquity tend to cluster in certain literary genres (Greek tragedies, Roman comedies etc) and archaeological evidence (funerary inscriptions) which further distorts our picture for the lived experience. The papers in this panel see new ways of analyzing material and literary recordings of girlhood that transcend the limits of representation and shed more light into individual experience and social identity, going beyond the elite that comprised only a small fraction of the ancient population. From ritual activity and the methodological problems inherent in current archaeological research on girlhood (Paper 2) to working life of girls (paper 3), one of the key goals of this panel is to look at the non-elite and often non-named girl's life in antiquity (Paper 4). Our literary record by focusing on either mythical figures or theatrical personae can present a masked emotional

experience and often trauma as the result of domestic violence, displacement and rape (Paper 5). Trying to discern character from person is not an easy task. Going from mythic representations in different sources to reality presents its own challenges. Last, but not least, ancient mythical and literary constructions of girlhood inform and become structural elements of contemporary works of literature and art (Paper 6). The intersections between ancient mythical girlhood and current works of literature can be further illuminating from the reception point of view of ancient literature. As contemporary characters interact with ancient heroines further questions arise about the notion of girlhood and its framing and uses.