Abstract — In the course of the 1870s universities began to admit women, reluctantly allowing them a scholarly education: the first Jewish woman to attend Newnham College, Cambridge, Amy Levy had the opportunity to study Latin and Greek and be part of a lively female intellectual society, increasingly interested in classical culture. Women’s classicism in the last decades of the nineteenth century has been defined “heretical”, for it challenged male hegemony over the “sweetness and light” of the Ancient World, dramatizing oppression, desperation, violence and murderous passions. Levy’s revision of myth is no exception: the heroines of her Ancient Greece are thought-provoking figures, who debunk the Victorian ideal of womanhood, while addressing broader issues of cultural inclusion as well as the notions of history, canonicity and myth. This essay focuses on three poems, A Greek Girl, Xantippe and Medea, all written between 1879 and 1882, exploring how Levy defies cultural, sexual and ethnical categories, and further experiments with formal strategies, moving from the dramatic monologue to the more complex closet drama.

Keywords: Levy, women poets, feminism, classicism, dramatic monologue