

## The new lives of Greek divinities in Western Europe (Lille/Paris, 23–29 May 24)

Lille and Paris, May 23–29, 2024

Deadline: Jan 15, 2024

Caroline Crépiat

"The new lives of Greek divinities in Western Europe: Textual and visual figurations from the 14th to the 16th century".

Workshops:

Thursday, May 23th, and Friday, May 24th, 2024, Lille.

Wednesday, May 29th, 2024, Arsenal Library, Paris.

Direction : Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas (University of Lille, ERC AGRELITA)

In his famous work, *La survivance des dieux antiques*, published in 1939, Jean Seznec demonstrated that knowledge of the Greek gods did not disappear during the Middle Ages, and thus challenged the opposition often drawn between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: "Pagan antiquity, far from being 'reborn' in 15th-century Italy, survived in medieval culture and art; the gods themselves were not resurrected, for they had never disappeared from the memory and imagination of men." He studied how, in the Middle Ages, the Greek gods, who then often bore their Latin names, survived thanks to the ideas they embodied and thanks to three main lines of interpretation, largely inherited from Antiquity - the evhemeristic explanation, the physical and astrological explanation, and the allegorical, moral and religious explanation. He also analysed how, at the same time, their forms were transformed, with surprising metamorphoses, before returning to antiquity during the Renaissance. New mythographic works were written from the 5th to the 13th century, starting with the ones by Fulgentius and the three Vatican mythographers, and from the beginning of the 14th century, evocations of pagan divinities were multiplying, as much in Latin works - such as Petrarch's *Africa*, Boccaccio's *Genealogie deorum gentilium* or Pierre Bersuire's *De formis figurisque deorum* - as in works written in French, starting with *Ovide moralisé*, followed by numerous reworkings, some of which contain French adaptations of Bersuire's text. The pagan Greek or Greco-Latin divinities, which rarely appeared in the first ancient novels and in the first French Universal Histories, were then used in a variety of textual universes: numerous Universal Histories and Chronicles, historico-fictional works, novels, didactic works about a wide range of topics, poetic works, epics, new translations of ancient texts, books of emblems, mythographic treatises... Among these, a large amount of new works specifically dedicated to the ancient gods were written at the end of this period. Finally, throughout this period, exploiting new sources, from the fifteenth century, in the French language, contributed to this renewal.

The many texts in which these divinities appear, in the illustrations of manuscripts and printed books, give them a new life rather than survival, or to say it more accurately: new lives. They are

represented in many different forms of writing and in many different environments, some of them are far removed from the ancient world. The metamorphoses of their forms in relation to ancient traditions, which are very varied but not always present, accompany their integration into these diverse contexts. New “adventures” were sometimes invented for them, and even, albeit exceptionally, new ancient gods were invented. The composition of treatises, exclusively devoted to them, reveals new analyses.

Based on case studies on one or more divinities, the workshops will be devoted to analyses of the multiplicity of representations, interpretations, and uses of these ancient divinities over the three centuries under consideration, by combining permanence and renewal, repetition and variation, continuity and innovation. They will provide the opportunity to extend research works on the ways and reasons for this multiplied presence of ancient divinities: why did these authors inspire news stories into the memory of ancient gods, why and how is it possible to give them back such a presence, why did they bring them back to life?

The submitted papers, based on works written in Latin, French, or Italian, may deal with the following themes, which do not exhaust the range of possibilities :

- Textual representations of Greek divinities, and how forms of writing are used - description, narrative, commentary.
- From translation and compilation to adaptation and invention: reconfigurations of inherited knowledge
- The literary contexts in which authors develop these textual images
- The cultural and political contexts and debates in which authors take on these divinities
- The interpretations of these divinities and the various purposes for which they are evoked - political, ethical, religious, scientific, poetic ones.
- The visual representations of these divinities in manuscripts and then printed books : how they are depicted and it does mean, how these representations are linked with other forms of artistic representation devoted to them
- The links between texts and images in manuscripts and printed matter
- The actualizing/anachronistic appropriation or, on the contrary, the view of Antiquity and its otherness reflected in the textual and visual images of these divinities
- The circulation, reception, and transformation of these representations from the 12th to the 16th century: the transmission and renewal of the memory of these divinities
- How these divinities are transposed into new worlds

For workshops held at the Arsenal Library (Wednesday, May 29th, 2024), submitted papers related to works preserved in the Arsenal Library come first.

Please submit a short abstract (200-300 words and a title) before January 15th, 2024 to Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas at the following two addresses:

catherine-bougassas@orange.fr

catherine.bougassas@univ-lille.fr

Travel and accommodation costs will be covered according to the terms of the University of Lille.

The papers will be published by Brepols publishers, in the “Research on Antiquity Receptions” series : <http://www.brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=RRA>

Presentation of the project: <https://agrelita.hypotheses.org/>

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### ERC Advanced Grant AGRELITA Project

The Reception of Ancient Greece in pre-modern French Literature and Illustrations of Manuscripts and Printed Books (1320-1550) : How invented memories shaped the identity of European communities

Direction : Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas

<https://agrelita.hypotheses.org/>

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#### Reference:

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