



The reception of ancient Greece in Europe through the dialogue between texts et images inside and outside the book (14th-16th century)

International conference - ERC AGRELITA
June 18-19, 2026 at the University of Caen Normandie

Call for papers

This conference aims to explore the literary, artistic, and cultural reception of ancient Greece through the prism of the relationships between texts and images in Europe from the 14th to the 16th century. How are the different visual and textual forms associated in this context? How was the alliance between text and image integrated into the processes of reception of ancient Greece, in the broad sense defined by Lorna Hardwick i.e., both the reception of its knowledge and texts, and the development of representations of ancient Greece? What does the collaboration between literary and visual creation bring to the various forms of reception of ancient Greece? What aspects of Greek antiquity, real or imagined, are particularly highlighted through the dialogue between texts and images in literary, historical, and philosophical works?

The conference will take place at the University of Caen Normandie on June 18–19, 2026. It will focus on the dialogue between texts written **in Europe from the 14th to the 16th century** (editions, translations, and commentaries on ancient Greek works, as well as new literary, historical, philosophical, and didactic texts) and images. Two main themes will be considered.

The first theme—**texts and images in the book**—concerns the dialogue between texts and images within manuscripts and printed books, from the perspective of their materiality and content. We will study the different links established between texts and images, the roles assigned to images in the multiple forms of reception of ancient Greece, and the evolution of this collaboration between textual and visual representations from the 14th to the 16th century. Attention will be given to the different forms of illustration and decoration found in manuscripts and printed works (paintings, engravings, drawings, marginal decorations, frontispieces, inscriptions, etc.).

The second theme—**texts and images outside the book**—focuses on the creation of images that exist outside the book but originate in one or more books, and that illustrate, develop, or rework a textual tradition about ancient Greece, containing a **textual trace or sign** (caption, inscription, poem beneath the image, speech scroll, representation of a book

within the image or visual object, etc.). This corpus includes various categories of works belonging to visual arts (drawings, engravings, emblems, paintings, sculptures, architecture, etc.), decorative arts (furniture, goldsmithing, stained glass, tapestry, precious objects, etc.), performing arts (ceremonies, theater, dance, opera, etc.), or applied arts (fashion, everyday objects, etc.).

These two themes invite reflection on the importance of **intermediality** in the reception of ancient Greece, in other words on the transfers of form and meaning between different media that contribute to this reception. Furthermore, the intermedial approach is not born *ex nihilo* but is founded on a legacy from the theorists of ancient Greek, as Jürgen E. Müller has pointed out, developing this concept in the 1980s¹.

The assertion of close links, even kinship, between the different arts is indeed ancient, as Aristotle already noted, in his *Poetics*, the similarities between the work of the poet and that of the painter: “the poet is a maker of representations, just like the painter or any other maker of images.”² Horace’s famous formula, *ut pictura poesis*³, lies at the heart of Renaissance art theory, justifying the idea that the work of painters is no less noble than that of writers. While the dialogue between the arts was strongly affirmed and valued from the 16th century onward, it was not absent in previous centuries, albeit in a less theorized form.

The intermedial perspective thus allows us to address the processes of creation and the transfers of form and meaning between text and image within a vast interdisciplinary field of study. Without excluding other approaches, proposals will highlight aspects still little explored concerning the versatility of artists, the circulation of models, and the strategies of representation of ancient Greece in the transmission from books to other visual works.

Within the space of the book, our first theme, what types of dialogue are established between text and image, and in what forms of illustrated books? What roles does the text play in relation to the image that illustrates it, and conversely, the silent image to the speaking text? The image illustrates the text, complicates a story, or, on the contrary, selects and simplifies the narrative; the image interprets the text, allegorizes or personifies a concept, sometimes alters its meaning, and can make present (“re-present”) what is not said; it deploys an ornamental function where it is not necessarily expected (in the margin, for example), gradually gaining autonomy from the text.

Other questions are raised by the second theme : how do images related to ancient Greece take shape outside the space of the book, while drawing on textual traditions about ancient Greece ? How do they reveal this heritage through the presence of short texts or textual signs on the image? and how to interpret these different forms of links between text and image, and these devices of mise en abyme? How do artists use them in their representations of ancient Greece?

¹ « En Occident, on analyse les médias séparément, alors qu’il semblerait que Aristote voyait la poésie et la musique comme une unité intermédiaire [...]. Le mot de Simonides de Kéos, “la peinture comme une poésie muette”, dans les *Moralia* de Plutarque, est une des premières réflexions sur l’interaction entre les médias » (MÜLLER, Jürgen E., « Vers l’intermédialité : histoires, positions et options d’un axe de pertinence », *Médiamorphoses. L’identité des médias en questions*, n°16, 2006, p. 101).

² ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, VI, 1460b.

³ HORACE, *Ars poetica* v. 361-365.

The various ways in which images emerge and are arranged in relation to texts do not exclude each other, and others undoubtedly remain to be studied in the field of reception studies of ancient Greece.

Submission guidelines

Proposals for papers, in **French or English** (title and abstract of **200–300 words**), should be submitted along with a **brief CV** by **December 15, 2025** to the following addresses:

- catherine.gaullier-bougassas@unicaen.fr
- lorene.bellanger@unicaen.fr

After review, notification of acceptance will be sent by **January 15, 2026**.

Travel and accommodation expenses will be covered according to the regulations of the University of Caen Normandie.

The conference proceedings will be published in Brepols' series "Recherches sur les Réceptions de l'Antiquité" (<https://www.brepols.net/series/RRA>). Submitted articles must be original and previously unpublished.

Organization

- Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas, Professor of Medieval French Language and Literature, ERC Agrelita (Principal Investigator), CRAHAM (UMR 6273), Université de Caen Normandie
- Julie Labregère, Postdoctoral Researcher, ERC Agrelita, CRAHAM (UMR 6273), Université de Caen Normandie
- Giulia Parma, Postdoctoral Researcher, ERC Agrelita, CRAHAM (UMR 6273), Université de Caen Normandie
- Lorène Bellanger, Project Manager, ERC Agrelita, CRAHAM (UMR 6273), Université de Caen Normandie

*

ERC Advanced Grant AGRELITA • The Reception of Ancient Greece in Premodern French Literature and Illustrations of Manuscripts and Printed Books (1320–1550) : How Invented Memories Shaped the Identity of European Communities.

The AGRELITA project was launched on October 1st, 2021. It is a 6-year project (2021-2027), which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 101018777).

For more information on the project: <https://agrelita.hypotheses.org/>