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InSpectA becomes KINSPECTA : KINesic Engagement and Experience of SPECTAtors from Greek Antiquity to the present

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InSpecta

becomes

KInSpecta



Since October 2023, the emerging project InSpectA **has evolved into a second phase, KINSPECTA**, supported by a **“Junior fellowship” (Chaire Junior)** at the **Institut Universitaire de France**.

KINSPECTA stands for “KINesic Engagement and Experience of SPECTAtors from Greek Antiquity to the present”.

It furthers the research on ancient spectatorships conducted in 2021-2023 while narrowing its scope to a topic fitted for a five-year-long project, involving personal and collaborative achievements.

KINSPECTA aims at deeply renewing the questions addressed to ancient sources about the experience of ancient spectators through an **interdisciplinary synergy** articulating the so-called classical methods of analysis (philological, literary, linguistic, dramaturgical, historical and archaeological) with the contributions of cognitive theories and experimental cognitive sciences. In order to better understand **the interdependence of the sensory, emotional and cognitive responses of the spectators** (and thus to go beyond a conception of the spectators’ activity as mere hermeneutic expertise), the scientific payoff consists first of all of updating our knowledge on the processes of **‘embodied cognition’**. Retaining in particular the hypothesis of sensorimotor resonance, defined as the spontaneous activation of sensory functions and motricity linked to the perception of an action engaged by another (whether seen or heard), KINSPECTA aims at producing a **kinetic study of the tragic and comic corpus of the classical period based on the analysis of recurrent dynamic tropes engaging a particular sensorimotor resonance**.

The hypothesis tested is that the **psycho-cognitive engagement of spectators is indissociable from bodily resonance mechanisms, even when (and maybe especially when) the dramas offer spectators high-level linguistic and hermeneutic challenges.**

This study will support a phase of **experimental work** in cognitive science. The objective is to bring out new data on the experience of ancient Greek theatregoers grounded not only in the methodologies of the sciences of antiquity but also in those of the experimental sciences.



Three connected tasks have been defined:

1) Collecting and analysing ‘kinetic tropes’

Close reading of dramatic texts (tragedy and comedy) (philology, literary analysis, performance criticism)

‘Kinetic tropes’ are defined as **semantic elements associated with physical movement**, involving the use of specific vocabulary, rhythm, stylistic figures and syntactic features that generate a dynamic physical engagement for the dramatic characters and choruses.

2) Understanding the reception of kinesic tropes by the audience in fifth-century BC

*The kinaesthetic effects of the kinetic tropes are analysed in light of the **experience and cultural conceptions of ancient Greek spectators** in their diversity of age, ethnicity, origin, gender*

This involves historical and archaeological approach to theatre; the history of the senses, emotions and cognition; the concomitant exploration of other ancient literary and philosophical texts on kinaesthetic empathy, etc.

3) Understanding the reception of kinesic tropes by the audience today

Putting the experience of ancient spectators into perspective with the experience of today's spectators

The objective is **to experimentally test the extent to which sensorimotor resonance in theatre is an important feature of the audience’s experience** and to analyse how it is verbalised by audiences today. This involves:

- Quantitative analysis

- Qualitative analysis: interviews, questionnaires, audience observation, targeting especially **spectators of modern productions of ancient plays in open-air theatres in France and Greece**, with the objective of reaching a firmer **scientific validity through cross-cultural and cross-language testing**.

KINSPECTA also aims to pave the way for an **international network** federating existing research projects in **theatre and cognitive science** in order to:

- facilitate **the sharing of data** (according to FAIR practices)
- Share **feedback** on methodology and epistemology
- envisage, in the long run, the **mutualisation of neuro-physiological measurement equipment**

The first step of this network consists in an ongoing collaboration between KINSPECTA and the CAT project ([Collective Affects in Theatre](#), cognitive sciences, ENS-PSL).



KINSPECTA has stimulated the emergence of an international network of twenty-two colleagues from:

ENS de Lyon

Lyon 2

Montpellier III

Paris X

Université

CNRS

Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports

École Française d'Athènes

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Roma Tre

Università di Bologna

Università di Siena

Clermont-Auvergne

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Coordinator of the KINSPECTA project

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University of London

Université de Genève

Groningen University

Harvard University

University of North Carolina Chapel Hill

Williams College

To find out more on Anne-Sophie Noel, KINSPECTA coordinator:

<https://www.hisoma.mom.fr/presentation/annuaire-du-personnel/noel-anne-sophie> and

<https://cv.hal.science/anne-sophie-noel>

Please reach out to Anne-Sophie Noel for further information and future collaboration (anne-sophie.noel@ens-lyon.fr)