

## **Suspense in Ancient Greek Literature**

# **Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes**

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## **Volume 113**

# **Suspense in Ancient Greek Literature**

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Edited by  
Ioannis M. Konstantakos and Vasileios Liotsakis

**DE GRUYTER**

ISBN 978-3-11-071539-2  
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-071552-1  
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-071558-3  
ISSN 1868-4785

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2020950019**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;  
detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2021 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston  
Editorial Office: Alessia Ferreccio and Katerina Zianna  
Logo: Christopher Schneider, Laufen  
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

## Preface

The origins of the present volume lie in the felicitous meeting of two young scholars, sometime in late 2015, in the reading rooms of the Blegen Library in Athens. Vasileios Liotsakis and Nikos Manousakis, both of them more or less at the beginning of their careers at that time, often worked side by side in the library and used to exchange ideas in the intervals of their research. They came up with the thought of organizing a conference on suspense in ancient Greek literature, a theme that seemed to call for a large-scale and trans-generic kind of treatment. The two of them then spoke of their plan to Ioannis Konstantakos, whom they knew well from their years as postgraduate students in the Faculty of Philology at the University of Athens. He enthusiastically joined in.

Sadly, the time was unpropitious for the materialization of a scholarly conference in debt-ridden Greece. In the years 2015–2016 the financial crisis had reached its peak, as the phantom of ‘Grexit’ and the palpable threat of total economic ruin were darkly looming over our heads. In spite of strenuous efforts, it proved impossible for the three aspiring convenors to secure the necessary funds for the conference. This plan had therefore to be abandoned, but the idea of suspense refused to be laid to rest and continued to goad us, in a most suspenseful manner. We thus decided to prepare a collective volume on the topic, in which chapters written by selected experts would be assembled, examining suspense in a wide range of literary works and genres of the ancient Greek canon. The present volume is the result of this endeavour, after several years of preparation and co-operative toil. Although Nikos Manousakis has not been able to collaborate as editor in the final project, due to a number of other commitments, the two remaining editors are deeply grateful to him for his inspiring flow of ideas and his generous contributions.

We are profoundly indebted to all our authors, who entrusted us with the fruit of their labours and assisted in the slow birth of this volume with infinite patience, cheering goodwill, and unfailing support. We have striven to serve their learned and painstaking work to the best of our abilities. We are also obliged to the anonymous reader who examined a draft of the book on account of the *Trends in Classics Supplementary Volumes* series. His/her perspicacious comments helped us revise and ameliorate many aspects of the volume. Last but not least, we are grateful to the editors-in-chief of the *Trends in Classics Supplementary Volumes*, Professors Franco Montanari and Antonios Rengakos, for accepting our project and hosting it in their renowned series. For the latter, in particular, something more needs to be said.

If there is one scholar who has contributed the most to the analysis and understanding of suspense in Classical literature, this is Antonios Rengakos. His seminal papers on the mechanisms of ‘Spannung’ in Greek epic and historiography (copiously referenced in most of the contributions in this book) have laid the groundwork for present-day research on ancient suspense and have been our main source of inspiration from the very beginning of this project. He has also been a crucial figure for the birth of this book in another respect: he embraced our proposal from the start and offered us constant encouragement and motivation throughout the protracted process of the preparations. We can never thank him enough for everything he has done for us. This volume, included in the celebrated series he has co-founded and dedicated to a topic which he has himself studied in an exemplary manner, is ultimately a tribute to his towering presence and his vast services to scholarship. With a keen feeling of suspense, we are awaiting his reaction, as soon as he will turn over the last page of the book.

Ioannis M. Konstantakos  
Vasileios Liotsakis

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## Vasileios Liotsakis

# Introduction

To examine the creation of suspense in narratives of various types is undoubtedly a much easier task for scholars of our day than it was before the 80s of the 20th century. In the last few decades scholars, specializing in narrative analysis, literary theory, and neuropsychology, have sought to analyse suspenseful discourse and, most importantly, have sought after paths of communication and interplay, thus realizing those preconditions which are required for the successful exploration of any phenomenon: a crystallized code of conceptualization of the aspects related to the notion in question, the methodological tools through which to empirically substantiate theoretical hypotheses, and the terminology necessary for the description of the phenomenon.

In the last decades, modern scholars and scientists realized significant steps towards a lucid conception of the idea of suspense and the layout of its spectrum, the different shades of this spectrum, and its typology. Literary theorists are today in general agreement about the narrative aspects that trigger the expectations of audiences and readerships about the development of a story. What is more, they are now in a position to draw the (sometimes indistinct) demarcation lines between the concept of suspense and other kindred notions, such as those of curiosity and surprise.<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously, empirical studies on narratees of various kinds have brought to light the cognitive mechanisms which bring audiences into a suspenseful state and the physical manifestations of the narratees' affective responses to a suspenseful narrative.<sup>2</sup>

Before the 80s scholars generally lacked the methodological foundations which would allow them to proceed with a systematic examination of suspense.

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I would like to thank Professors Ioannis Konstantakos and Christos Kremmydas, as well as Dr. Chrysanthos Chrysanthou, for reading the initial draft of this introduction and for providing me with their invaluable comments.

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<sup>1</sup> Chatman 1978, 59–62; Sternberg 1992, 472, 507; Luelsdorf 1995, 2–3; Hoeken/van Vliet 2000.  
<sup>2</sup> Zillmann *et al.* 1975; Jose/Brewer 1984; Dijkstra/Zwaan/Graesser/Magliano 1994; Gerrig/Bernardo 1994; Miall 1995. The editors of the seminal volume *Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analyses, and Empirical Explorations* (Vorderer/Wulff/Friedrichsen 1996) recognized two main perspectives from which to examine the concept of suspense: (a) that of the narrative qualities of the text that elicit suspense, and (b) that of the receiver, i.e. the cognitive, physical, and affective responses triggered by suspenseful stories. Cf. Knobloch's (2003, 379–385) catalogue of modern streams in the studies of suspense.

The meagreness of the scholarly ‘acquis communautaire’ of that era becomes evident, *inter alia*, by the proneness of many interpreters to introduce their pioneering treatises with nothing but vague dictionary definitions, thereby underlining the superficiality and thus the inadequacy of those definitions. In 1980, in his monograph *Spannung in Text und Film: Spannung und Suspense als Textverarbeitungskategorien*, the pedagogue Heinz-Lothar Borringo opens his analysis with the definition of *Larousse Dictionnaire Encyclopédique*:

Suspense n.m. moment d'un film, passage d'une oeuvre radiophonique ou littéraire, où l'action tient le spectateur, l'auditeur ou le lecteur dans l'attente angoissée de ce qui va se produire.<sup>3</sup>

In the following paragraphs Borringo places the *attente angoissée* under the microscope by discerning its two fundamental elements, namely the fear and hope which we feel about those protagonists of a story with whom we are sympathetic.<sup>4</sup> In 1994 the psychologist Minet de Wied opens her article “The Role of Temporal Expectancies in the Production of Film Suspense” by referring to the definition of suspense as

a state of uncertainty and delay that builds up anxiety as one awaits the outcome of a situation,<sup>5</sup>

a definition which she draws from an unspecified dictionary of literary terms. De Wied complains that “the usefulness of such general definitions of suspense is quite limited”, and then endeavours to illuminate the concept of delay and the way in which it is experienced by readers when the narrative violates their expectations about when an outcome will emerge.<sup>6</sup> In the same spirit, in 1996, William F. Brewer points out the incongruity between various definitions of suspense found in dictionaries and theoretical treatises with regard to whether suspense is a pleasant or an interruptive emotional state.<sup>7</sup> Borringo, de Wied, and Brewer are only three from among a number of researchers of their period, who contributed largely to the conceptualization of the DNA of suspense and to the consolidation of the clear picture we have about it today.<sup>8</sup> These scholars started studying the

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<sup>3</sup> Borringo 1980, 39.

<sup>4</sup> Borringo 1980, 39–49.

<sup>5</sup> De Wied 1994, 108.

<sup>6</sup> De Wied 1994, 108 and *passim*.

<sup>7</sup> Brewer 1996, 107–108.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. also de Wied 1991; de Wied/Tan/Frijda 1992.

phenomenon of suspense from the theoretical treatises of Chatman and Sternberg, as well as from the profound remarks of the father of suspenseful films, Alfred Hitchcock, which were available in the printed versions of the interviews he offered during the 50s and 60s.<sup>9</sup>

It is, of course, undeniable that short definitions in dictionaries are often scientifically inadequate by virtue of the fact that they emerge from the lexicographers' vague conceptions of a notion and from their practice of drawing from their predecessors' approaches. Nonetheless, despite their abstract character, the aforementioned definitions do offer the seeds of what modern scholars consider as the fundamental and distinctive qualities of suspense. First, suspense is described as an emotional state, which is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, insecurity, and fear.<sup>10</sup> Second, this sense of insecurity is caused by our ignorance of what will happen in the narrative future of a story, namely the way in which the plot will unfold.<sup>11</sup> Third, the root of our expectancies is a kind of narrative (e.g. a film, a novel, or an orally transmitted tale).<sup>12</sup> Last but not least, this emotional state is an intense experience with distinct physical symptoms.<sup>13</sup> What has changed from the 'Era of dictionaries and Hitchcock' is that, since then, each of these aspects and its relationship with the rest of them has been specified in depth. Hence, depending on which of these elements is the main subject of a study, we may organize in our minds modern theories of suspense into four different but closely interrelated directions: (a) the narrative perspective; (b) the sociological perspective; (c) cognitive studies; and (d) neuropsychological studies.<sup>14</sup>

No empirical studies have been conducted about the cognitive and affective responses or their physical symptoms caused in modern audiences by ancient Greek suspenseful discourse. On the other hand, classicists have examined suspense in ancient literature from a narrative and sociological point of view, which is also the case with the contributions of the present volume. For this reason, in what follows we analyse in depth only perspectives (a) and (b), while cognitive

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**9** Hitchcock 1959; Truffaut 1985.

**10** Chatman 1978, 59–60; Borringo 1980, 38–39; Ortony/Clore/Collins 1988, 131; de Wied 1994, 109, 111; Dijkstra/Zwaan/Graesser/Magliano 1994, 146; Gerrig/Bernardo 1994; Luelsdorff 1995, 1, 3; Leonard 1996; Prieto-Pablos 1998, 100; Hoeken/van Vliet 2000, 285; Wulff 1996, 4–6; Baroni 2007, 269–271.

**11** See below, n. 21.

**12** Smuts 2008, 281.

**13** See above, n. 2.

**14** See Knobloch's (2003, 379–385) comprehensive categorization and review of current theories on suspense.

and neuropsychological concepts and terms are only employed when needed for a better understanding of the ideas exposed below.

## 1 The narrative perspective: Structuring suspenseful discourse

Long before the explosion of the intense scholarly interest in suspense in the 80s and 90s, literary criticism had already laid down a theoretical basis for perhaps the most prevalent school of examination of suspense, namely narrative analysis. In the first decades of the last century Russian formalism, in its bid to treat the text as an autonomous entity (a machine, an organism, or a system), contributed immensely to the distinction between the actual temporal sequence of the events narrated in a story and their arrangement in the narrative through linguistic means.<sup>15</sup> In the ensuing decades this distinction between ‘event structure’ and ‘discourse structure’ shaped the most influential structuralist theories of literature, such as those of Seymour Chatman and Meir Sternberg.<sup>16</sup> The subsequent theoretical anatomization of narrative bodies materialized as a categorization of the different narrative structures of stories and of the cognitive and affective responses which these structures can elicit. One of the sundry outcomes of this procedure was thus that narrative structures which trigger the narratees’ suspense were distinguished from those eliciting curiosity and surprise.

All three narrative types (eliciting surprise, curiosity, and suspense) are based on the concealment of information from the narratees. First, in stories that cause our surprise, the narrator omits information which allows us to anticipate a certain future event. As a result, when this event occurs in the story, narratees, who are unwarned about this development, are taken by surprise. Needless to say, the same emotional effect can also be caused by the creation of expectations in the narratees’ minds for an event and by its eventual unexpected cancellation.

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<sup>15</sup> Thompson 1971; Erlich 1980; Steiner 1984.

<sup>16</sup> Chatman 1978; Sternberg 1978. This structuralist focus had an immense impact on subsequent suspense theories: Bruce 1980, 296; Brewer/Lichtenstein 1982; de Wied 1994, 109–110; Brewer 1996, 110–111; Hoeken/van Vliet 2000; Baroni 2002; Baroni 2004a and 2004b; Baroni 2007.

What is more, our surprise for an unexpected event or the cancellation of an expected one can elicit and/or enhance our suspense about what comes next in a story.<sup>17</sup>

Second, curiosity is defined as the narratee's desire to learn what has happened in the narrative past. In these cases, the narrator conceals what has happened before the narrative present. For instance, in the opening scenes of a detective film we are informed that a murder has occurred, but we are deprived of the details crucial for the investigation of the case, such as who the murderer was, what his/her motives were, or who the victim was and how (s)he died. In this way, the author invites the narratees to follow the development of the plot, with their main purpose being to establish the truth of what *had happened*.<sup>18</sup>

In a different way, story structures that elicit our suspense orientate our interest towards what *will* happen in the ensuing plot development. In these cases, the narrative opens with an event which is presented as leading to a certain outcome with significant, usually negative, implications for the protagonists of the story. However, the author does not reveal beforehand such details about the plot's eventual resolution. On the other hand, the material is organized within the story in such a way that the narratee becomes confused between a number of coexisting contingencies of potential scenarios as to what will finally happen, and is kept in anxiety until the very end of the story. This anxiety emerges as a mixture of our fear for developments disastrous for our beloved characters (the so-called 'harm anticipation' phenomenon), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, our hope that the characters will successfully overcome difficulties and potential calamities.<sup>19</sup> Only then does the author reveal to the narratees the outcome, and very often there follows a series of retarding elements (interruptions,

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**17** Chatman 1978, 59–62, and for suspense and surprise as two complementary concepts, see 60–61; Baroni 2002, 116.

**18** Baroni 2002, 117. The distinction between 'curiosity-eliciting' stories and 'suspense-eliciting' stories is by no means restrictive and solid. Even in cases when narratees are curious about what had happened in the past, they experience suspense concerning the future developments of the plot, exactly because it will be these developments that will reveal to the narratees a secret about the prehistory of the story. In those cases the narratees' interest for the past of the story coincides with their interest for its future (on similarities and differences between narrative structures of curiosity and suspense, see Baroni 2002, 118–119). Besides, the words 'curiosity' and 'curious' are normally used in daily-life language for suspense about future developments too, which is why the contributors of the present volume avoid following the 'curiosity–suspense' distinction.

**19** Borringo 1980, 38–39; Ortony/Clore/Collins 1988, 131; Gerrig 1993, 77–78; Cantor 2002, 295.

cancellations, and reversals), which escalate the suspense before the story's final resolution.<sup>20</sup>

In Classical studies the most influential treatments of the way suspense is elicited by the organization of the narrative material have traditionally been produced by Homerists. In 1933 George Duckworth, in his book *Foreshadowing and Suspense in the Epics of Homer, Apollonius, and Vergil*, discerns two kinds of suspense: (a) suspense of uncertainty, when the narrator/poet does not allow the narratee to learn beforehand the outcome of a story/episode; and (b) suspense of anticipation, when narratees have *a priori* been informed through foreshadowings about the eventual resolution of the plot, but they still wonder about when and how this resolution will come about.<sup>21</sup>

In 1992 James Morrison, in his study *Homeric Misdirection: False Predictions in the Iliad*, defines three kinds of misdirection, all of which are associated with the creation of suspense: (a) false prediction, which is essentially the technique of retardation in all its three versions as defined by Reichel (postponement, interruption, and reversal);<sup>22</sup> (b) epic suspense, which is closely linked with the third sub-category of retardation (reversal), namely the inclusion of an unexpected episode which interrupts the plot development and cancels an expected outcome; in the course of such episodes, narratees often anticipate when the main plot will start unfolding again; and (c) thematic misdirection, namely a false foreshadowing of events that will never come.<sup>23</sup>

In his seminal and often-cited study of 1999, "Spannungsstrategien in den homerischen Epen", Antonios Rengakos used the aforementioned studies (Duckworth, Reichel, and Morrison), along with others as well, as starting points and offered a 'grammar' of the main techniques of eliciting suspense in the Homeric epics. These are the following: (a) retardation (interruption, deceleration of narrative pace, and reversals); (b) piecemeal revelation of events/information (what Carroll defines as the phenomenon of 'cataphora'); (c) dramatic irony; and (d) misdirection. Rengakos also opens a dialogue with Duckworth's theory, by distinguishing the 'Spannung auf das Was', when narratees ignore the final outcome of a story (cf. Duckworth's suspense of uncertainty) from the 'Spannung auf das Wie', when narratees are cognizant of what will happen at the end but ignore the how and the when (cf. Duckworth's suspense of anticipation).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Chatman 1978, 59–62; Borringo 1980, 38–45; Baroni 2002, 117–118.

<sup>21</sup> Duckworth 1933.

<sup>22</sup> Reichel 1990.

<sup>23</sup> Morrison 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Rengakos 1999.

Some thoughts about the association between the concept of dramatic irony and suspense might be helpful here. Our emotional involvement in a story does not necessarily mean that our affective responses align closely or exactly with those of the protagonists. We are often concerned about the future of the heroes even when they are in an absolutely serene state. The narrator often offers us the opportunity to observe the course of events from angles that are different from those adopted by the participants in the story, which is why we sometimes receive more information on the imminent dangers or successful outcomes than the heroes do (cf. the effect of dramatic irony). This distance between our knowledge and that of the characters leads us to feel suspense about them, while they are unsuspecting and therefore calm. For example, as external observers, we may watch a threat coming upon a hero, while (s)he is totally ignorant of the imminent calamity. As a result, in such cases we are in excitement not only about the character's life but also about how (s)he will feel in case (s)he does not manage to avoid the upcoming disaster.<sup>25</sup>

Now, as for retardation, on a cognitive level it generates suspense, exactly because it violates the audience's temporal expectancies about the order, frequency, and duration of the events narrated. These expectancies emerge from both our life experience and our literary sensibilities.<sup>26</sup> First, we adopt certain temporal expectancies from real life. Living in our social and natural environment as active agents, we develop interpersonal relations, which we terminate or preserve in time by creating a net of causal interactions, while we express our feelings, knowing or hoping that we will experience other people's responses. In affairs with which we are invited to cope by using our reason, we set out our arguments, usually expecting our interlocutors' counterarguments. On a moral level, according to the degree to which our actions conform to any given society's moral demands, we can imagine in advance whether we will enjoy the approval or the criticism of our narrow or wider social circle. Even in our interplay with the elements of nature, we know that specific choices will sooner or later give rise to certain chain reactions in our surroundings.

This ability to anticipate the time of outcomes on all these levels of our lives ('temporal predictability') lies in the fact that we experience this complex net of actions and reactions not only as agents but also as observers, which is why we gradually become familiar with the ways in which life events unfold. We there-

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<sup>25</sup> Esslin 1977, 45; Chatman 1978, 59; Truffaut 1985; Dijkstra/Zwaan/Graesser/Magliano 1994, 139; Rengakos 1999, 323–324; Smuts 2008, 281.

<sup>26</sup> De Wied 1994.

fore obtain the impression that human affairs take place in a regular and therefore predictable fashion. Although being aware of the central role of chance in our lives, and despite our inability to foresee a significant extent of what happens around us, we feel quite confident that certain affairs unfold in a similar way and in relatively predictable temporal sequences. This conviction leads us to consolidate in our minds some specific types of event sequences, which cognitive scientists often describe as ‘plan schemas’, and, the more predictable certain event sequences are, the more confident we feel about the plan schemas we have adopted for them. These plan schemas thus help us to generate specific expectancies about what will happen and whether it will occur in the near or distant future.<sup>27</sup> For example, when ancient or modern readers read that two hostile armies camp close to each other, they anticipate a battle, because they know by experience that in this case this is the most plausible scenario.

The temporal expectancies of the narratees about the order, frequency, and duration of the events of a story also emerge from the narratees’ tendency to predict a story’s development. Being experienced in suspense story-structures due to our experience in both life and similar narrations, as soon as we watch the initiating event, we are in a position to apprehend that it may cause certain consequences for some characters of the story. As the story unfolds, from the initiating event, through the intermediate discourse material, and until the outcome, it is our uncertainty for what exactly will eventually happen to the protagonists that makes us feel suspense.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, our affective response to suspense discourse-structures is partly due to the fact that such narratives are recognizable by us as ‘suspense stories’, since (a) they resemble similar event sequences in real life and (b) they constitute narrative *topoi* of our culture, which are often described as ‘story schemas’.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, as soon as we realize that we are faced

27 Lichtenstein/Brewer 1980; Brewer/Lichtenstein 1981 and 1982; de Wied 1994, 114–115.

28 Brewer/Ohtsuka 1988; Borringo 1980, 53; Wulff 1996, 2.

29 Mandler/Johnson 1977; Thorndyke 1977; Bruce 1980, 295–296 with further bibliography up to his time; Brewer/Lichtenstein 1981; Brewer 1985; de Wied 1994; Luelsdorf 1995, 4. Cf. sentence schemas in Wulff 1996, 3. On the combination of life experience and knowledge of the genre see Wulff 1996, 3–4. See also Mikos’ (1996, 41–43) term ‘film literacy’ for the viewers’ experience of certain cinematic patterns and conventions. Wuss (1996, 56) distinguishes three kinds of filmic structure, which, I believe, can also be used for further narrative art structures (prose, epic poetry, and theatre): perception-based structures, which become effective only after they recur many times in the plot; conception-based structures, for which a single appearance is sufficient; and stereotype-based structures, “which only start to develop as a result of repeated use within several films of a cultural repertoire, so that they have the character of secondhand structures in current experience”. Cf. Baroni 2002, 122–124; Baroni 2004a, 29.

with an initiating event, we create temporal expectancies about the ensuing plot development, with the centre of our uncertainty and anxiety lying in the eventual outcome of the story.

These thoughts are of particular significance for the ability of ancient typical narrative structures to elicit the audience's suspense. For example, the Homeric epics are marked by the recurrence of both typical phrases (formulae) and plot structures. It could therefore be argued that the repetitive nature of the epics renders them boring. However, it is exactly the typicality of scenes and episodes in the epics that raises the audience's anticipation for a certain outcome. In the *Iliad* the following narrative formula (story schema) is regularly encountered: hero A notices hero B, who stands in front of his comrades, and wishes to confront him. Hero A therefore moves in front of his own fellow soldiers and fights hero B.<sup>30</sup> After sundry cases of this storyline, we read that Agamemnon saw Issus and Antiphus, and anticipate that he will attack them (*Il.* 11.101–103).

Interdisciplinary experiments, which combine the methods of psychology, cognitive science, and neuropsychology, and which are often based on the participants' self-reports and the examination of their autonomous disturbances (intuitive neural reactions), have demonstrated that the violation of our temporal expectancies, which emerge from our plan schemas and story schemas during our reading, watching, or listening to a narrative, increases our suspense. The retardation of the pace of a narrative is one of the most significant techniques of this violation of our temporal expectancies which forces us to experience suspense. In simple words, presenting the eventual outcome to take place later than was expected has proved to cause suspense. In essence, a “temporal contrast” is generated, which is based on “a temporal disparity between an event's actual and expected ending”.<sup>31</sup> A central factor in this respect is the “subjective proximity of the outcome event”: the recipients of a story or narrative experience more suspense when the outcome event seems to be subjectively near than when it seems to be still far away. It has also been demonstrated that the neural disturbances that accompany suspense are more intense not when we are presented with the final result but while we are waiting for it.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Fenik 1968, 20, 68.

<sup>31</sup> De Wied 1994, 113.

<sup>32</sup> De Wied 1994, 112–113 with further bibliography.

## 2 The sociological perspective: Narratees, character portraiture, and suspense

Experiments from the field of neuropsychology have demonstrated that the emotions we experience while reading a suspenseful book or while watching a suspense-laden film activate physiological intuitive reactions that are similar to those we experience in real-life stressful situations. And exactly at this point the question arises as to why our neural system and inner world are so sensitive when exposed to stories that are fictional, or that do not concern us, or both. Even if we accept that our excitement about the end of a story is enhanced by techniques such as misdirection, retardation, and narrative complication, one could still wonder why we should care at all about heroes who do not exist.

The explanation to our mysterious behaviour as recipients of a suspenseful narrative lies to a high degree in the relations we develop with the protagonists of the plot, a theme which is the focal point of interest of the second aforementioned (sociological) approach to suspense. We are often in anguish about the outcome of a story, because we fear that potential undesirable developments will negatively affect the emotions and lives of the protagonists that we are fond of ('harm anticipation' phenomenon). Moreover, it is commonly agreed that we are more often favourably disposed towards heroes whom we approve of on a moral level. These personages adopt an ideological system similar to our own. Subsequently, it is easier for us to identify with such protagonists than with others, exactly because they remind us of ourselves in the way they act and handle moral dilemmas. More importantly, these heroes are not merely pleasant to us; they also symbolize diachronic moral values of human society. For this reason, the possibility that they will prevail over their enemies increases our suspense until the very end, because in our minds it is not merely a matter of a hero overcoming adversity, but also a broader question of good prevailing over evil, justice over injustice, and virtue over vice.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that we identify with our beloved protagonists on a moral level is the reason why we share with them a common 'horizon of expectations'. In suspenseful accounts the initiating event often leads the protagonists towards certain fears and hopes for the end. Moreover, the intermediate discourse material between

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<sup>33</sup> Borringer 1980, 37–38; Jose/Brewer 1984; Zillmann 1980; Zillmann 1991, 282; de Wied 1994, 110; Dijkstra/Zwaan/Graesser/Magliano 1994, 141, 145; Zillmann 1994; Carroll 1996a; Zillmann 1996; de Wied 1994, 110, with further bibliography; Prieto-Pablos 1998, 104–107; Bryant/Miron 2003, 57; Knobloch 2003, 382.

the initiating event and the resolution, by complicating situations, deferring the plot development, and increasing the number of the possible outcomes, postulates the protagonists' agony and uncertainty. As we are watching our favourite heroes struggling over their future, we empathize with them, because we have the same expectations as they do. It is thus our moral identification with the protagonists that, among other factors, forces us to become emotionally involved in what unfolds within the fictional world of a narrative work.

On the other hand, we sometimes adopt a character's perspective and experience the suspense which (s)he feels without necessarily identifying with his/her ideology or even without liking him/her. In cinema and theatre we are often forced to watch certain scenes through the eyes of secondary or even anonymous personages. In cinema, for example, a camera may represent the gaze not of the protagonists but of a neutral observer. The latter viewpoint, due to its limited field of vision, is deprived of the opportunity to predict the outcome of the situation in which this neutral observer participates, and, therefore, the observer experiences uncertainty and suspense. Being forced by the film director to watch the events through the eyes of characters that are insignificant to us, we are led to the same state of agony. This technique is characteristically exemplified by the messenger speeches in ancient Greek tragedy, in which we experience the messenger's anxiety in the way he experienced it as a first-hand witness of the events described. Undoubtedly, we anticipate the outcome of messenger narratives, because their outcome concerns the main protagonists with whom we are morally and emotionally involved. Still, in this case, the intensification of our suspense lies in the fact that we adopt the point of view of characters who are immaterial to us.<sup>34</sup>

The 'cognitive turn' in Classical studies of the last few decades has contributed, *inter alia*, to the systematic clarification of the ways in which the narratees' effort to apprehend and assess the characters of a story often emerges as an intense, and therefore suspenseful, intellectual and affective state. The crucial step towards this direction lay in the way that scholars began increasingly to place emphasis on the narratees' role in the characterization of literary figures (either individual or collective entities, such as cities or peoples). Classicists today focus not only on ancient authors' judgments of a hero or on their techniques of presentation of a protagonist, but also on what cognitive and emotional reactions these techniques trigger in the narratees' minds. Christopher Gill argues that ancient authors invited their audiences and readerships to proceed with a moral evaluation of the protagonists through comparing them with an established, communal

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<sup>34</sup> For this technique of creation of suspense in the ancient novel, see Grethlein 2015.

point of reference of morality. To this evaluative perspective ('character-view-point') Gill juxtaposes one further kind of approach to literary characters, the one he defines as a 'personality-viewpoint', which lies in the fact that both author and narratee endeavour to understand, interpret, and decode a character's traits and conduct without necessarily aiming at assessing them.<sup>35</sup>

Gill's view that the ancients were more concerned with the moral evaluation, rather than the comprehension of literary figures, has been opposed by a number of studies, which shed further light on the techniques through which ancient authors invited their audiences to reflect intellectually rather than ethically on the actions or decisions taken by the protagonists of a story. Building on modern studies of the psychological processes in the reading of fiction, Stephen Halliwell recognizes that the various modes of representation of a character begin from the author's narrative means, but are transformed into palpable depictions of characters in the reception of these techniques through the audience's "non-literary ways of looking at people in the world".<sup>36</sup> Chiara Thumiger recognizes that ancient tragedians could not reshape mythical characters unless their linguistic tools were deciphered by the audience's evaluative filters, with regard to what an individual should do in terms of their relationship with the gods, in decision-making, and in their interaction with and self-placement in current social structures.<sup>37</sup> In a similar vein, and being influenced by Chatman and Sternberg, de Temmerman and van Emde Boas treat the procedure of characterization in antiquity as referring "both to the ways in which traits (of all kinds) are ascribed to a character in a text, and to the interpretative processes by which readers of a text form an idea of that character".<sup>38</sup>

This focus on both the moralizing and the interpretative orientation of characterization in antiquity justifiably raises the question of the degree to which ancient literary portraiture was associated with the creation of suspense. As already noted, narratees naturally tend to worry about an ensuing calamity only if it is likely to threaten the welfare or the lives of characters towards whom narratees have been favourably predisposed during the plot development. And if psychologists are right in believing that our sympathy towards a character presupposes a certain degree of presumed equivalence between our moral horizon and that of the character, ancient texts, being rich in techniques of delineation of the individuals' moral qualities, offer fertile ground and invaluable material for those

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<sup>35</sup> Gill 1983, 469–487; Gill 1986; Gill 1990.

<sup>36</sup> Halliwell 1990, 58.

<sup>37</sup> Thumiger 2007, 11–57.

<sup>38</sup> De Temmerman/van Emde Boas 2018, 2.

who wish to elaborate on the role of ancient schemes of moral assessment in the creation of suspense. The majority of studies on suspense in antiquity admittedly focus on the narrative aspects of this effect, namely the element of narrative retardation and its sub-techniques, while the delineation of characters has attracted much less attention in this respect. In a foil to this approach, most papers of the present volume examine the ways in which the moral identification between characters and audiences contributes to the generation, maintenance, and intensification of suspense. The contributors to this volume share the belief that ancient authors deliberately led their audiences and readerships to approve morally of the heroes and characters, and thus worry even more about their fate and attend with greater interest to the storylines of the corresponding works. The presence of this particular technique of eliciting suspense in more than one literary genre in antiquity provides us with a solid stimulus by which to speculate about the degree of a cross-generic conceptual and compositional continuity in terms of suspense and about potential, either immediate or indirect, influences.<sup>39</sup>

In ancient Greek literature, the narratees' route towards the consolidation of a clear picture of a character was very often a process of mind-reading, during which the author led the audience to further questions as well as answers.<sup>40</sup> Of course, ancient authors very often express their verdicts on the characters they present in a straightforward fashion, such as through the immediate verbal attribution of traits and dispositions. However, in antiquity characters were equally often delineated in an implicit, covert way, so that audiences and readerships were invited to enter a process of constant and intense speculation about the quality of a character. This 'metonymic' characterization emerges from an abundance of information, which, apart from its crucial role in plot development, also implicitly colours the characters of a story. A character can be delineated through his or her visual representation on stage ('by appearance'), as well as through their actions, their emotional state, and the modes they give vent to it. Moreover, in ancient Greek tragedy, where characters emerged as confirmations or violations of the traditional mythical archetypes from which they stemmed, they were shaped in the audience's eyes through comparison with the way that they were presented in myth or in earlier plays ('inter-textual characterization') or through

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<sup>39</sup> It is noteworthy that another basic technique of suspense in antiquity, i.e. retardation, is acknowledged to have been transmitted to prose genres from epic poetry (Rengakos 2006a and 2006b). In a similar way, one should not exclude the possibility of cross-generic influences in terms of techniques of characterization.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. e.g. the studies on mind-reading by Budelmann/Easterling 2010 on Greek tragedy and Minchin 2019 on the *Odyssey*.

their juxtaposition with other characters of the same play, e.g. through foils ('intra-textual characterization'). Classicists have repeatedly noted that ancient Greek authors, by means of such modes of indirect and sometimes deliberately vague characterization, aimed to put their audiences and readerships into a state of insecurity and intense wondering about the nature of the characters. This practice was aimed, *inter alia*, at intensifying the interest of the recipients and occasionally their suspense.<sup>41</sup>

This covert specification of characters on the author's part forces the narratees to gradually shape their view of the features and mentality of a character. This mental process presupposes and aspires to generate a state which is immediately associated with suspense, namely the prolonged intensification of one's interest during the progression of the narrative. The gradual revelation of a character's traits, as the piecemeal disclosure of all kinds of information (what we defined above as the phenomenon of 'cataphora')<sup>42</sup> invites us to engage cognitively and emotionally with the fictive individuals, is achieved in sundry ways and is aptly categorized by the inclusive terms 'up-bottom characterization' and 'top-down characterization', introduced by de Temmerman and van Emde Boas. On a cognitive level, the intellectual processes in the recipient's mind marked by these two terms are defined by de Temmerman and van Emde Boas as follows:

Top-down characterization: the construction of a *mental model* of a character on the basis of pre-existing types or categories (both literary and 'real'); one piece of information about the character activates a 'package' of corresponding expectations and knowledge about that character's traits and dispositions.<sup>43</sup>

Bottom-up characterization: the gradual accumulation of information about an individual's character which cannot immediately be connected to pre-existing schemas, categories, or types, contributing to the construction of a composite *mental model* of that character.<sup>44</sup>

Both kinds of mental formation described by de Temmerman and van Emde Boas are characterized by uncertainty and confusion, which are two fundamental elements of generating suspense. The ambiguity and implicit nature of ancient Greek literary portraiture reflects the profound intellectual effort required both in antiquity and today for reaching safe conclusions about ancient literary figures. This parsimonious mode of characterization can elicit suspense especially in two ways, without of course other possibilities being excluded. The first way is when

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<sup>41</sup> De Temmerman/van Emde Boas 2018, 20–21.

<sup>42</sup> Carroll 1996a. Cf. Wulff 1996.

<sup>43</sup> De Temmerman/van Emde Boas 2018, XVI.

<sup>44</sup> De Temmerman/van Emde Boas 2018, XII.

the revelation of the character's qualities and mentality creates hints and raises questions about the plot development. This applies especially in cases in which the narratees' horizon of knowledge coincides with that of the protagonists, namely when the latter's opinions and knowledge about the events and the characters involved in them are the sole elements which the narratees are offered by the author in order to assume what will happen. In Apollonius' *Argonautica* Aeetes' characterization by his grandson as a monstrous figure elicits suspense as to how the Argonauts will face the Colchian king.<sup>45</sup> In a similar fashion, in Aristophanes' *Knights* the description of Demos ('People') at a point in the play when Demos has not yet appeared on stage raises the audience's anticipation of what they will see when Demos will appear on stage.<sup>46</sup>

The representation of a character may also serve as a source of suspense, especially when the 'great questions' of the narratee about the final resolution of the plot are linked with the questions concerning one of the characters, such as whether or not an individual will develop his/her character, how (s)he will behave, or what stance (s)he will adopt towards the world. To take one of the most celebrated examples: Alexander the Great was famous, among other things, for the way in which he was gradually corrupted by his power during his expedition in Asia. His dynamic portrait is delineated both by Curtius and Arrian, and it is also discernible in the fragments of the lost histories of Alexander. When Arrian programmatically boasts that he will offer an original version of Alexander's career, he essentially invites his readers to anticipate how he himself will present this famous shift in the Macedonian king's character.<sup>47</sup> Andreas Markantonatos, in the present volume, offers one further striking example of suspense built on the issue of a hero's character: he analyses the techniques through which Sophocles, in his *Philoctetes*, elicits suspense about how Neoptolemus will treat the moral dilemmas posed for him by Odysseus and Philoctetes.

### 3 Violating the ancient narratees' foreknowledge: 'Suspense of distraction'

One wonders, of course, to what degree the suspense experienced by a modern viewer or reader can be compared with the suspense experienced by the ancient

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<sup>45</sup> Klooster 2018, 86.

<sup>46</sup> Bowie 2018, 382.

<sup>47</sup> Liotsakis 2019a, 1, 77–80, 164–165.

Greeks. The latter were very often liable to watch or read works whose plot they were already familiar with. Let us take the example of a literate Athenian of the 4th century BCE. As a child, he would read the *Iliad* after having already been informed of the fall of Troy and of Hector's death at Achilles' hands, by virtue of his knowledge of the mythical tradition. Later on in his life, as an adult citizen, he would attend performances of tragedies, whose plot was based on myths already known to him. Furthermore, if his historical interest led him to read or listen of the battle of Salamis in Herodotus' account or of the Peloponnesian War in Thucydides' work, he would meet with the description of episodes or events which he had either participated in or already heard of. What were the chances for this Athenian to experience suspense about narratives that were primarily based on well-known mythical and historical material?

The most compelling way to answer this question is perhaps to treat it as part of modern theoretical speculations on the 'resiliency of suspense', in cases in which we already know the end of the work we read. When discussing our favourite movie, we very often admit that we have watched it many times. We are also frequently faced with books, plays, and films that are based on widespread myths or celebrated historical events. And still, most of us would claim that we have experienced in those cases suspense that is equally intense to the suspense which we feel when we read stories about which we have no foreknowledge. At this point a reasonable question arises: if suspense requires our ignorance of and uncertainty about the eventual outcome of the story we attend, is it then possible for us to experience suspense about already known stories? Many modern scholars argue that this phenomenon is possible and describe it as 'the paradox of suspense' or 'anomalous suspense'.

As already discussed, suspense is an emotional state that we enter when specific linguistic and narrative techniques trigger certain cognitive and affective mechanisms of our system. The 'paradox of suspense' has therefore been approached from the perspectives of both the text and the mental constitution of its recipients. As far as the latter are concerned, Walton argues that while listening to a story for the second, third etc. time, we do not experience the suspense we had experienced when we first heard of the story, but we *pretend* that we are in a state of anxiety. Charmed by the fascinating experience of the initial reading, listening, or viewing of a story, we desire to re-experience the same emotions. For this reason, as soon as we face the same story again, we pay no attention to the fact that we know what will happen in the narrative, and we participate in a cognitive make-believe game, in which we pretend that we are unaware of what is to follow. In order to support his view, Walton refers to the agony which children

re-experience when their parents read to them the same fairy-tale again and again.<sup>48</sup>

In the field of psychology, Gerrig agrees with Walton that people can feel suspense even if they are informed of the end of a story. In his effort to develop Walton's theory, Gerrig defines this emotion as 'anomalous suspense' and suggests that it results not from a conscious game of make-believe but from unconscious cognitive functions of our brain. In real life we are used to believing that every imminent experience will be unique and different from what we have already faced. Even when we participate in situations that resemble previous events, we are certain that these experiences are similar to, but not identical with, what we have seen in the past. Subsequently, we have been trained by life itself to know that the future always brings us new challenges and developments. According to Gerrig, being used to such cognitive procedures, while observing a story that is already known to us, we unconsciously bypass our long-term memory of its plot and instantly have the illusion that what we will see will be something new. For this reason, we manage to retain our uncertainty, which is a basic prerequisite for suspense.<sup>49</sup>

However, any effort to describe the emotional state of suspense in antiquity with the terms 'paradox of suspense' or 'anomalous suspense' would be anachronistic. The scholars and scientists who discuss the phenomenon of the 'paradox of suspense' and the 'resiliency of suspense' are drawing on the axiom that people can experience a strong degree of suspense in narratives whose eventual outcome they themselves do not know. It is to this kind of *normal* suspense that scholars seem to juxtapose 'anomalous suspense', which we experience even when we know the end of a story. Exactly at this point, however, one should point out the inadequacy of this modern categorization for the description of suspense in the Graeco-Roman world. This is because the terms 'paradox' and 'anomalous' imply that suspense in stories of well-known resolution is an exception to the rule of suspense in stories of unknown resolution. However, although this way of thinking corresponds to our (modern) era of inexhaustible production of *original* plots, it carries much less value in the conception of suspense in antiquity, exactly because in most ancient literary genres the norm was to create plots whose outcome was already known to the narratees. Since in antiquity the rule was to experience suspense about plots with *known* endings, for ancient Greeks the less common type of suspense, the 'paradoxical' or 'anomalous' suspense, would

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48 Walton 1990, 259–270.

49 Gerrig 1989a, 1989b, 1996, 1997.

have been the one which they experienced when they were *not* informed beforehand of the outcome of a story, as was (often) the case in ancient comedy and the novel. And what prevails in the surviving ancient Greek discourse of suspense is the weaponry of techniques through which ancient authors endeavoured to surpass this prior acquaintance of their audiences and readerships with the eventual outcome of their narratives; these techniques were used by ancient authors to distract the narratees from their foreknowledge of the story's end. From this point of view, a term much more fitting to the very essence of ancient Greek suspenseful discourse would be the 'suspense of distraction'.

Techniques of suspenseful distraction are evident in the *Homeric Hymns* and ancient tragedy. Almost a century ago, in his study *The Use of Myths to Create Suspense in Extant Greek Tragedy*, William W. Flint demonstrated that ancient Greek dramatists aimed at composing original plots either (a) by means of their personal innovative interventions in pre-existing myths, or (b) by combining different, coexisting local versions of a myth. In this way, authors violated their audience's mythical knowledge and the expectations it generated, bringing the spectators into a state of uncertainty about how a story would unfold, which is a basic prerequisite for the creation of dramatic suspense.<sup>50</sup> Aristotle's definition of tragedy (*Poetics* 1449b24–28) testifies to the view that these techniques of distraction were particularly effective:

ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν.

Tragedy is the *mimesis* of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in embellished language of distinct kinds in its separate parts; in the mode of drama, not of a narrative; and through pity and fear producing the purgation of these emotions. (transl. Liveley)

Although Aristotle does not refer to suspense directly, his description of the audience's emotional state and of the psychological processes that are activated by the narrative qualities of the text reminds one of suspense and of some of its distinctive features mentioned so far. Similarly to the structuralist theories of suspenseful discourse, Aristotle seems to think that a clear and sufficiently extensive

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50 Flint 1921.

plot development is a basic prerequisite for the excitement of the audience's emotions.<sup>51</sup> What is more, the emotions generated by a dramatic work are sympathy towards the protagonists and thus fear for their fate, concepts which are closely related, as demonstrated so far, with dramatic suspense. Polyxeni Strolonga and Andreas Markantonatos analyse in their papers in this volume how the poet of the *Homeric Hymns* and Sophocles distorted the traditional mythical background of their plots in order to confuse their audiences as to what will happen at the end of the stories they narrate.

In recent decades a number of scholarly studies have also focused on the techniques of creating suspense in ancient Greek historiography. Scholars unanimously agree that ancient historians, although — and perhaps *exactly because* — they related events already known to the audience, employed an abundance of narrative schemes through which they endeavoured to distract their readers from their foreknowledge of *what* will happen at the end of a story; and they achieved this kind of distraction by orientating readerly interest towards *how* things led to known outcomes.<sup>52</sup> However, at this point it is worth noting that even historiography, as a genre, could sometimes elaborate on events and situations unknown to the audience. This is not the case, of course, with major events of Greek history, such as the battle of Salamis in the Persian Wars or the Athenian disaster in Sicily during the Peloponnesian War; still, later on, when historians related events which occurred in remote places, such as the expedition of the Ten Thousand (Xenophon) or Alexander's wars in India (first historians of Alexander), readers of mainland Greece should very probably not have known the eventual outcomes of the events they read about.

Comedy and the ancient novel transcended the limits of suspense of distraction, since they could normally create suspense about the eventual outcome of the plot. In these two genres authors were free to create stories of a high degree of originality, the final resolution included. Needless to say, both comedy and the novel were confined by generic typologies in terms of their narrative arrangement and themes. Nonetheless, compared with other genres of antiquity (tragedy, historiography, and biography), ancient comic playwrights and novelists were not so much obliged to shape their plots in accordance with a restrictively precise mythical or historical background. In comedy in particular, as well as in oratory,

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51 On Aristotle as the 'forefather' of structuralism, see most recently Liveley's discussion (2019, 1–9 and 25–62) with exhaustive bibliography. On ancient literary criticism and suspense, see further Novokhatko's chapter in this volume.

52 Rengakos 2006a and 2006b; Grethlein 2009; Miltisios 2009; Liotsakis 2017, 102–140; Liotsakis 2019b and 2019c; Rood 2019.

authors could achieve perhaps the highest degree of emotional and moral identification between the characters and the audiences, given that both comedy and rhetorical speeches were written by Athenians for Athenians and with regard to issues of the Athenian political life. In this volume Ioannis Konstantakos and Christos Kremmydas analyse the ways in which Aristophanes and the orators of Athens took advantage of the Athenians' emotional involvement with their city's foreign and domestic policy in order to elicit suspense concerning the fate of the characters of their stories.

## 4 Suspense theories and controversial issues of Classical Philology

The concept of suspense has traditionally been offered as a solution to some of the most celebrated issues of debate in Classical Philology. In this case too, of course, classicists' tendencies to interpret various types of disruption of the plot's smooth flow as a means of creation of suspense should not be considered in seclusion from the overall theoretical framework of modern literary criticism that has developed in the last two centuries. This is because similar interpretive dispositions are traced in studies of modern literature as well. As demonstrated at the beginning of this introduction, theories of suspense emanated from the emphasis laid by intellectual movements such as Russian formalism and western structuralism on the techniques of sewing together narrative episodes that represent the actual events of a story. This emphasis led one of the central exponents of Russian formalism, Victor Shklovsky, to explain some distinctive features of works of various eras and literary currents as containing suspenseful elements. Shklovsky was inspired to a high degree by Conan Doyle's detective stories, observing that the adventurous tales of Sherlock Holmes attract readerly interest also through the technique of retardation. Thus, based on works in which suspense indeed lies in the core of the author's goal-setting, Shklovsky explains, in a similar way, qualities of works which at first sight do not appear to have stemmed from the author's wish to elicit suspense. In Shklovsky's mind, the paratactic accumulation of short stories in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, a typical feature of the 'archaic' novel structures, serves as a deceleration of the plot development. Similarly, in his *Crime and Punishment* Dostoyevsky employs the digressive parts of his work as a means by which to interrupt the narrative flow and thus create

suspense. Finally, Dickens' *Little Dorrit* is treated by the Russian formalist as a mystery novel.<sup>53</sup>

One further striking example in this respect concerns the delay with which Hamlet kills the murderer of his father in Shakespeare's famous play. This narrative retardation is the main reason why T.S. Eliot judged *Hamlet* to be an "artistic failure".<sup>54</sup> According to Eliot, Shakespeare touched upon issues of human psychology, yet in this play he lacked the required degree of penetrating empathy, which is why he failed in presenting these issues in a credible fashion. In this respect, the delay before Hamlet's killing of his father's murderer mirrors the spiritual perplexity of the dramatist while he is faced with psychological issues posed by himself and his incapability to fruitfully address them.<sup>55</sup> In opposition to this excommunicating verdict, there are those who chose to legitimize the retarding nature of the play by seeing it as the suspenseful means by which Shakespeare intended, deliberately and artfully rather than confusingly and unconsciously, to highlight the ethical dilemmas posed for Hamlet — the thought that he had to kill his uncle, his intellectual paralysis, and the tension emerging from his interaction with the world.<sup>56</sup>

These examples from modern literary criticism are useful for our subject to the degree that they show how elements which are often taken as disrupting the coherence of a story, interrupting its plot development, and intensifying the fragmentation of its narrative layout, have equally been addressed from the perspective of the degree to which they contribute to the generation of the narratees' suspense. Accordingly, in the field of Classical Philology the element of suspense has repeatedly been exploited as a solution for some of the most debated 'problems' of ancient Greek literature. Let us begin with the most celebrated case, namely that of the Homeric Question. The thematic incoherence between different episodes, their clumsy (according to many) interconnections, and the incongruities created between certain scenes have traditionally constituted the bulk of the argumentation of Analysis, i.e. those scholars who have doubted that the Homeric epics, as they stand, were the product of one and the same poet, and who have instead argued for their multilayered composition in terms of both time and themes. And still, the very same narrative elements have been treated by the Unitarians as indicating a single poet's methodical effort to decelerate the narrative pace, and thus as testifying for the existence of a robust composer with a concrete

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53 Erlich 1980, 245–246, 260.

54 Eliot 1920b.

55 Eliot 1920b.

56 Conrad 1926.

narrative plan for a suspenseful account. Those episodes which had been seen by the Separatists as incompatible segments of a ‘Frankenstein’ poem were treated by Unitarians, such as Scott, Duckworth, and Schadewaldt, as a means of interruption, postponement, and false foreshadowing, all of which were aimed at exciting the audience’s interest in discovering *how* the plot will unfold until an already known resolution.<sup>57</sup> Unitarian studies, along with those of structuralists, such as Chatman and Sternberg, have today resulted in the common scholarly tendency to admit the unity of the Homeric epics, and have therefore offered the conceptual momentum and confidence required by more systematic treatises of epic suspense — and of the predominant technique of its creation, retardation — such as those of Reichel and Rengakos.

The element of suspense seems to have led to a similar turn in one further celebrated ‘problem’ of Classical Philology, the Thucydidean Question, which comprised, as the Homeric Question does, two sides, the Separatists and the Unitarians. The main point of the Separatist argument has been that Books V and VIII constitute drafts, which Thucydides never revised due to his unexpected death. The incomplete state of these two books was discerned in some of their striking differences from the other books of the *History*, such as the lack of speeches, the inclusion of treaty texts, and, principally in the case of the eighth book, the alleged lack of a clear-cut orientation of the account towards a specific narrative goal. However, the studies of Timothy Rood and Carolyn Dewald have demonstrated that in Book V most events lead to the battle of Mantinea, while Book VIII is full of near-miss episodes. These theories offered the basis for Liotsakis’ study of Book VIII, in which the two debated books of the *History* and many of their peculiarities are treated as two extensive narrative retardations which aimed at eliciting suspense concerning how the Spartans recovered after their failure on Sphacteria and how the Athenians similarly recovered after the Sicilian disaster.<sup>58</sup>

In the same spirit, some papers of this volume readdress issues of authorship and the narrative (dis)unity of some works, both of prose and of poetry, by treating some of the debated features of those works as techniques of creation of suspense. In the same way as Shklovsky considers the paratactic accumulation of stories in *Don Quixote* to represent a means of narrative delay, Polyxeni Strolonga reads afresh the fragmentary character of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and the supposed incoherence in the articulation of episodes; she transfers her focal point of interest from the lack of unity created by this fragmentation towards the

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<sup>57</sup> See the introduction in Rengakos 1999.

<sup>58</sup> Rood 1998b, 262; Dewald 2005; Liotsakis 2017, 103–140.

manner in which these episodes create surprises and violate the audience's expectations, thus eliciting suspense with regard to the development of the plot and the sequence of the scenes. Nikos Manousakis questions the view that the *Persae* constitutes a static play and, drawing on the results of cognitive studies, foregrounds the dynamic and escalating way in which Aeschylus reveals information from episode to episode, thereby creating suspense about the eventual entrance of Xerxes. Francis Dunn moves beyond the scholarly tendency to see Euripides' *Ion* as a work of speculation on issues of personal and collective identity and psychology; he touches instead upon the speculations and suspense raised by this play in connection to the moment when the affective bond between mother and son will be achieved. Vasileios Liotsakis expands his Unitarian reading of Thucydides' Book VIII and examines the 'near-miss episodes' in Thucydides; he proposes that the examination of this suspenseful element offers answers not only to the question of the final state of the Thucydidean text but also to that of Thucydides' development as an intellectual and writer during the Peloponnesian War.

## 5 Outline of the present volume

In Part I: Literary Criticism, Anna A. Novokhatko examines the notion of suspense in the works of ancient critics. In her paper “ἵν' ὁ θεατῆς προσδοκῶν καθῆτο: What Did Ancient Critics Know of 'Suspense'?", she demonstrates that, although in antiquity there was no systematic terminology for the concept of suspense and no definite classification of the narrative techniques which create it, ancient critics were cognizant of this concept and addressed the features which are required for the creation of suspenseful narrative (uncertainty, piecemeal information, retardation etc.). Drawing from an abundance of sources related to ancient literary criticism (Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle, Callimachus, and later literary critics), Novokhatko concludes that “although the term and notion of 'suspense' *per se* was not elaborated upon in ancient criticism, the elements of the text regarded as prerequisite conditions for suspense, and the question how and for what reasons these elements were combined together in order to influence the recipient in a certain way, were discussed and analysed in detail”.

Part II: Archaic Poetry begins with Ruth Scodel's paper “Homeric Suspense”. Homeric epic employs a range of techniques to create suspense, even though the audience knows the outcome of the story. Sometimes the narrator expands episodes whose outcome was truly indeterminate; sometimes he seeks to create uncertainty about the way in which the only possible conclusion can be reached.

Even when the audience knows what will happen in an episode, the narrator can delay the ending or leave open the question how the characters will react. Composing for listeners, he often provides guidance about the direction of the narrative, but not so much information that they feel no suspense. When the audience is fully informed, people are likely to be so engaged with the characters that they experience the characters' fear as their own, especially when they do not know exactly how the characters will handle the truth.

Polyxeni Strolonga explores the techniques of creating suspense in four *Homeric Hymns* in her contribution "Suspense, Orality, and Hymnic Narrative: The Case of the *Homeric Hymns*". In her view, it is the use of mythic variants that intensifies the audience's interest during the performance of a *Homeric Hymn*. The poet was called to face the fact that the audience was already acquainted, through the oral mythical tradition, with the gods' exploits. He therefore endeavoured to make his listeners momentarily 'forget' their knowledge by deviating from the traditional mythic versions through the use of original scenes. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* the poet violates the audience's expectations by complicating the plot in a series of original episodes. Strolonga also readdresses some allegedly problematic features of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* by foregrounding the ways in which these features serve as a means of narrative retardation before their eventual resolution. From a similar angle, Strolonga also examines the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* and the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*.

Part III: Tragedy comprises three chapters on the three major tragedians of the 5th century BCE (Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides). The section opens with Nikos Manousakis' paper "Waiting for Xerxes: Information Economics and the Composition of a Suspense Plot out of Familiar Events in Aeschylus' *Persae*". Drawing on the outcomes of cognitive studies and literary criticism, Manousakis questions the view that the *Persae* is marked by its static plot development. He argues, instead, that the work unfolds as a suspenseful, escalating retardation, which places the audience in a state of high anticipation for Xerxes' appearance. Aeschylus' piecemeal revelation of information (cf. above, the concept of 'cataphora') and his use of different perspectives from which to present the same event belie, according to Manousakis, the view about the static character of the play and reveal instead all those techniques through which the dramatist renders it into a dynamic and suspenseful pending state of waiting for Xerxes' eventual arrival as the great defeated.

The diversity of perspectives and their capacity to immerse the audience into a confusing, and thus suspenseful, perception of a play also occupies the interest of Andreas Markantonatos in his chapter "Narrative Suspense in Sophocles: The Moral Perplexity of Duelling Narratives in *Philoctetes*". Markantonatos highlights

the suspenseful nature of the divergence between Odysseus' and Philoctetes' accounts of the circumstances under which the Greeks had abandoned Philoctetes in Lemnos. In the Prologue of the play the audience watches Odysseus trying, by means of a distortive flashback, to convince Neoptolemus to distract Philoctetes away from Heracles' bow. In Markantonatos' view, it is not only Neoptolemus that is beguiled by Odysseus but the audience as well. And as soon as Philoctetes' account rebuts Odysseus' version, the audience members, while being swayed by three different perspectives (their own, Odysseus', and Philoctetes'), also experience suspense about whether or not Neoptolemus will decide to participate in Odysseus' new plotting against Philoctetes.

If Sophocles compensates the audience's knowledge of the eventual outcome by stimulating speculations in a moral sphere, Euripides' *Ion* transfers, according to Francis Dunn, the focal point of the audience's attention from epistemological questions towards the issue of the mutual need of Ion and Creusa to develop the affective bond of son and mother. The two protagonists reveal to each other only parts of their common prehistory, and they recognize the similarities between their stories. They also proceed to offer strong expressions of mutual sympathy and, in an alarmingly indiscreet fashion, ask each other about their lives. These elements, along with others, are taken by Dunn as indications of Euripides' great concern about building up suspense with regard to how the realization of the affective bond of mother and son will eventually come about. Dunn offers a close reading of the narrative means by which Euripides heightens suspense, concerning not merely the moment when mother and son will reunite, but especially the question whether or not they will succeed in satisfying the emotional needs of one another.

In Part IV: Comedy, Ioannis Konstantakos surveys the works of Aristophanes in his chapter "Staged Suspense: Scenic Spectacle, Anxious Expectation, and Dramatic Enthrallment in Aristophanic Theatre". In Aristophanic comedy suspense is generated in various types of episodes and for a range of dramatic purposes. Scenes in which the comic hero is threatened with violence by the Chorus (e.g. the *parodoi* of the *Acharnians* and the *Birds*) make spectators fear about the hero's safety. Long sequences of tension revolve around a character's liberation from confinement (Philocleon in the *Wasps*, Peace in the homonymous play). Monstrous enemies (Polemos in the *Peace*, Lamachus in the *Acharnians*) are conjured up and kept in the background as a menace to the fulfilment of the main character's plans. Suspenseful story-arcs from tragedy (e.g. the capture of a child hostage in Euripides' *Telephus*) are parodied, and the suspense of the tragic model is exploited as a factor in the production of humour. Suspense is also employed in order to heighten the effect of the contests of wits (e.g. in the *Knights*

and the second part of the *Frogs*). A distinctive aspect of Aristophanic suspense, which foreshadows Hitchcock's visual poetics, is the use of powerful theatrical images, in which the audience's feelings of anxious apprehension are condensed and visibly portrayed through a staged spectacle, as in the *Acharnians* and the *Thesmophoriazusae*.

Part V: Historiography opens with Vasiliki Zali's chapter "Suspense in Herodotus' Narrative of the Battle of Thermopylae". In her contribution Zali examines the way in which Herodotus attracts the excitement of readers about how the events will lead to one of the most celebrated moments of the Persian Wars. Two principal methods of creating suspense are recognized, retardation and misdirection. From the Greeks' decision to face the Persians at Thermopylae until the eventual outcome of the battle, Herodotus composed an extensive account, which now comprises eight pages of the standard OCT edition. In this segment of the work the historian decelerates the narrative pace in order to intensify the reader's anxiety and thus highlight the significance of the battle. Zali discerns several manifestations of retardation in geographical descriptions, catalogues of military forces, and episodes, all of which reflect the greatness of the Persian armada and the extensive time it took to reach the narrow spot of Thermopylae.

In his paper "The Thucydidean Question, Structuralism, and 'Neo-Unitarianism': Near Misses and Suspense in the *History*" Vasileios Liotsakis argues that a particular shift is discernible from the first four books to the last four books of the *History* in the way Thucydides uses near miss episodes. Up to the Spartan failure on Sphacteria the near misses are dissociated from one another with regard to the outcome which each of them leads us to anticipate; by contrast, after the account of Sphacteria and until the end of the *History*, they are organized in two suspenseful narrative threads, which concern respectively the state of the Spartan army after the defeat at Sphacteria and the state of the Athenian navy after the destruction of Athenian forces in Sicily. The Thucydidean narrative thus evolves from a phase in which it elicits suspense of a local range to a phase in which it raises intense speculation about issues of Panhellenic gravity. Liotsakis thereby seeks the roots of this narrative development in Thucydides' intellectual evolution, an issue closely related to the so-called Thucydidean Question.

This section ends with Nikos Miltsios' paper "Suspense in Conspiracy Narratives: Polybius and Appian". By comparing Polybius' and Appian's accounts of conspiracies, Miltsios demonstrates that in such episodes ancient Greek historians elicited readerly interest primarily through the identification of the reader's horizon of knowledge with those of the protagonists, and mainly of the plotters. The conspirators' expectations and hopes are the main perspective from which

the reader is forced by the historian to follow the story. In this way, ancient authors kept readers in suspense as to whether or not the goal of the machinations will be fulfilled and as to what the end of the conspirators will be — and the suspense was maintained unabated until the end of the episode. Miltisios concludes that this “rhetoric of conspiracy” is one further strong piece of evidence “that knowledge of the events does not prevent the author from composing a nail-biting narrative”.

The chapters of Part VI: Oratory elaborate on how Attic forensic speeches in private and public trials may elicit suspense in both ancient jurors and modern readers. In his study “Suspense in Lysias” Michael J. Edwards contends that, although the Athenian jurors already knew the outcome of the cases under examination, speakers could rivet the audience’s interest in sundry ways in the actual sequence of the events at stake. In this way, ancient litigants underlined the differences between their versions of the case and those of their opponents, fashioned both their images and those of their adversaries (*ethopoiia*), and led the jurors in the production of certain affective responses and favourable decisions. Edwards elaborates on three speeches of Lysias to this end. He first analyses the narrative means by which Lysias elicits suspense in his *On the Killing of Eratosthenes* and *Against Simon*. In contrast to these two speeches, *Against Eratosthenes* was delivered (or, at least, it was written as such) by the prosecutor, and therefore it was the first to be heard by the jurors. In such cases, Edwards argues, the jurors’ suspense is even more intense, given that they would be acquiring information of the case for the first time.

Christos Kremmydas adds to Edwards’ study of private speeches the issue of suspense in public forensic orations. In his article “Narrative and Suspense in Public Forensic Orations” he explores the suspenseful aspects of five case-studies from the works of Demosthenes, Aeschines, Lycurgus, and Apollodorus in the years 346–330 BCE. In these examples the forensic speaker could generate suspense on how the events at stake took place, targeting his listeners’ mixed affective state, which oscillated between hope and fear about situations that concerned not only the litigants but also the city in its entirety. Suspense also contributes to the delineation of both the speaker’s and his opponents’ portrait (*ethos*), and thereby earns itself a dominant place among the orator’s weaponry of persuasion. Kremmydas concludes that the degree to which past narratives in public forensic speeches could build up suspense was defined by their social, historical, and legal framework.

The volume ends with Part VII: Novel and Silvia Montiglio’s study “Suspense in the Ancient Greek Novel”. Montiglio examines the techniques of creating sus-

pense in the five Greek erotic novels (Chariton's *Callirhoe*, Xenophon's *An Ephesian Tale*, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, and Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*) and concludes that, although there were plenty of suspenseful schemes in ancient Greek literature, "with the noticeable exception of Heliodorus, novelists make little use of them". Chariton and Xenophon provide the reader with so much beforehand information about the outcomes both of the entire plot and of individual episodes that they spoil any desire for a suspenseful reading. Achilles Tatius more frequently conceals information, uses digressions in order to interrupt the plot development, and switches from one field of action to another at pivotal points of the story. However, "his comical flair also punctures the suspense", which is also the case with Longus.

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## Part I: **Literary Criticism**



Anna A. Novokhatko

## ἵν' ὁ θεατὴς προσδοκῶν καθῆτο: What Did Ancient Critics Know of 'Suspense'?

The search for a discussion of an audience-oriented device termed 'suspense' in antiquity would be highly anachronistic in and of itself. Theories of suspense were for the most part developed in the 20th century, supported by the new medium of film viewing. This paper will argue, however, that suspense was an important category of text processing from the earliest texts on.<sup>1</sup> Ancient critics were aware of this category and elaborated strategies that create suspense in the text, although the concept of narrative and dramatic suspense had a variety of designations.

Even today, there is no single definition of suspense: a wide range of approaches are discussed in the introduction to the present volume.<sup>2</sup> Cognitive psychologists have often enough argued that suspense is a composite emotional state, an emotional amalgam, comprised of fear, hope, surprise, anxiety, and the cognitive state of uncertainty.<sup>3</sup> In this paper I will argue that affects such as recipients' experience were well-known in ancient critical thought and were discussed from the perspective of text production and also text reception. In other words, rival poets and critics determined the extent to which texts were 'suspenseful' in a modern sense, including uncertainties in the narrative outcome, the degree of danger a protagonist faced, anticipation of time, and such like. Their focus was on the reception process, the cognitive activities of the audience, the expectation and curiosity of recipients, and the recipients' emotions (hope, anxiety, fear, surprise). Audience responses to specific features and characteristics of the text were of crucial importance for ancient authors and playwrights, and for their critics.

Thus, it will be argued, although the term and notion of 'suspense' *per se* was not elaborated upon in ancient criticism, the elements of the text regarded as prerequisite conditions for suspense, and the question how and for what reasons these elements were combined together in order to influence the recipient in a

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I am grateful to Professor Glenn Most for his encouraging comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

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1 On suspense in Archaic poetry, see Scodel and Strolongia in this volume.

2 Cf. Vorderer/Wulff/Friedrichsen 1996, vii.

3 See Ortony/Clore/Collins 1988, 131 and Smuts 2009; cf. the introduction to this volume.

certain way, were discussed and analysed in detail.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, the categories and criteria of text processing will be discussed, on the levels both of text production and reception, as commented upon by ancient authors such as Old and Middle comic playwrights, Plato, Aristotle, Callimachus, and later literary critics.

Self-referential deliberations of the poets should not be equated with critical analysis.<sup>5</sup> The earliest Greek notions connected to text exegesis reveal a growing interest in early Greece in the written (mostly, but not only, Homeric) text, its evaluation and interpretation, and stylistic and hermeneutic analysis. All of these we could define as textual and literary criticism today.<sup>6</sup> Archaic poetics has been thoroughly investigated.<sup>7</sup> Many pre-Socratics and sophists engaged in text exegesis, commented on literary techniques and certain text elements.<sup>8</sup> However, the best surviving evidence for the early development of literary criticism comes from the extant comedies of Aristophanes and from fragmentary Sicilian and Athenian Old Comedy. Playwrights such as Epicharmus, Telecleides, Crates, Cratinus, Eupolis, Strattis, and many others wrote plays on literary themes, commented on their own dramatic technique and on that of their rivals, and played around with notions and theories from contemporary intellectual debates.<sup>9</sup> Certain criteria emerge from comedy for the evaluation of literary texts and reflect the authors' own literary tastes and those of their recipients. The approach to text elements that served to create narrative suspense, such as the cognitive state of uncertainty, prospective emotions of hope and fear, surprise, anguish, expectation, keeping recipients' attention, and desire-frustration, as seen in the critical considerations of ancient authors, will be the focus of this chapter.<sup>10</sup>

Modern theory has sought to answer a so-called 'paradox of suspense'. In what ways might a text with a 'certain' and well-known outcome, such as Greek tragic myths, generate feelings of suspense?<sup>11</sup> It has been argued that knowledge

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4 For the narrative perspective of modern theories of suspense, see the introduction to this volume.

5 For early Greek observations on poetry, see Lanata 1963; Grube 1965, 1–12; Nagy 1989.

6 On Hellenistic and Roman literary criticism, see Hunter 2015 and Nünlist 2015.

7 After the seminal work of Giuliana Lanata (1963), who gathered together the most important poetological attestations in pre-Platonic literature, the most important contributions are Ford 1981 and 2002, 1–157; Nagy 1989; Halliwell 2002 and 2011.

8 Richardson 1975.

9 Wright 2012.

10 On various conditions for suspense and on narratological and psycholinguistic approaches that sum up these conditions, see Iwata 2008, 19–36 with further bibliography.

11 Smuts 2009. See also the introduction and Manousakis' chapter in this volume.

of the outcome can in certain conditions render a narrative more rather than less suspenseful. As the audience knows what has occurred/will occur to Agamemnon, what Oedipus has learnt/will learn about his past, in other words, as the audience knows what the outcome has been/is going to be and that it has been/will be both awful and tragic, a more suspenseful viewing or reading is guaranteed. The contrast here is with a reading where the outcome would be uncertain. Recent studies in cognitive psychology question the interdependency of suspense and uncertainty and argue that “uncertainty is processed separately as management of the amount of knowledge about the outcome available to the spectator, which acts as a control signal to modulate the input features, but not directly in suspense computing”.<sup>12</sup>

The enigmatic effect of tragedy on the recipient, the evaluation of uncertainty, and the acknowledgement of the awareness of the plot prior to viewing the play had already been questioned in Classical Greece, together with the growth and development of theatre and dramatic performance.<sup>13</sup> In the only surviving fragment from Antiphanes' comedy *Poiesis* (after 388/384 BCE) a character (a comic playwright?) complains about the 'advantages' tragic playwrights hold over their rival dramatic genre of comedy (fr. 189.2–4 Kassel/Austin):

[...] εἴ γε πρῶτον οἱ λόγοι  
ὑπὸ τῶν θεατῶν εἰσιν ἐγνωρισμένοι,  
πρὶν καὶ τιν' εἰπεῖν.

Firstly, the plots are known to the spectators before they are uttered.

It is significant that the spectators (to a certain extent) know the myths and thus the tragic solemn plot (the σεμνὸς λόγος according to Crates fr. 28 Kassel/Austin) in advance (πρὶν καὶ τιν' εἰπεῖν). Further, Antiphanes formulates the effect on the

<sup>12</sup> Delatorre/León/Salguero/Palomo-Duarte/Gervás 2018. See also Iwata 2008, 28–30.

<sup>13</sup> One of the earliest commentaries on the peculiarities of tragic plot remains Crates (*fl.* 450–430 BCE). In his *Paidiai* (probably in the parabasis) he claims: τοῖς δὲ τραγωδοῖς ἕτερος σεμνὸς πᾶσιν λόγος ἄλλος ὅδ' ἔστιν (fr. 28 Kassel/Austin: “[However] all the tragic performers have a diverse solemn plot, this is different”). See Perrone 2019, 150–153 and cf. Arist. *Po.* 1449a19; Ar. *Ra.* 833–834, 1004. Crates' verse is not clear. Various translations are possible; cf. Storey 2011, 225 (“This is a different sort of story, a serious one, for all the tragic poets”); Farmer 2017, 28 n. 49 (“all the tragedians have this whole other solemn *logos*”); Perrone 2019, 150 (“ma tutt'altra storia, da rappresentazioni tragiche, per tutti veneranda è questa qui”). On the obscurity of the term λόγος here see Farmer 2017, 28 n. 49 with further bibliography.

recipient. When no particular verbal or dramatic means are available and dramatic suspense is reduced, the tragic playwrights, Antiphanes' character argues, use the theatrical crane as a last resort (fr. 189.13–16):

ἔπειθ' ὅταν μηδὲν δύνωντ' εἰπεῖν ἔτι,  
κομιδῇ δ' ἀπειρήκωσιν ἐν τοῖς δράμασιν,  
αἴρουσιν ὥσπερ δάκτυλον τὴν μηχανήν,  
καὶ τοῖς θεωμένοισιν ἀποχρώντως ἔχει.

And then when they cannot say anything anymore and entirely give up (are lost) in their plays, they raise the theatrical crane like the (middle) finger, and it is enough for the spectators.

The discussion of different effects on the audience as a result of different genres is significant. The genres are opposed and juxtaposed. For the comic playwrights the situation is more complicated than for tragedy, as they lack a range of devices (17, ἡμῖν δὲ ταῦτ' οὐκ ἔστιν). Whilst tragic playwrights, according to Antiphanes, work with ready material, comedians have to invent plots, the background, names, and the structure with prologue and epilogue and so on (fr. 189.17–21):<sup>14</sup>

ἀλλὰ πάντα δεῖ  
εὐρεῖν, ὀνόματα καινὰ — X — U —  
X — U — κάπεται τὰ † διωκημένα  
πρότερον, τὰ νῦν παρόντα, τὴν καταστροφὴν,  
τὴν εἰσβολήν.

But we have to invent everything, new names [...] and then † what happened before, what is going on now, the ending, the beginning.

A number of components which help determine the effect on the audience are listed here, the comedian discussing the tools which he employs in his work. The character on stage claims that if a comic character were to forget to employ these tools, he would immediately be criticized by the audience. Tragic characters enjoy much more freedom (fr. 189.21–23):

[...] ἂν ἔν τι τούτων παραλίπη  
Χρέμης τις ἢ Φεῖδων τις, ἐκσυρίττεται·  
Πηλεῖ δὲ ταῦτ' ἔξεστι καὶ Τεύκρῳ ποιεῖν.

If one of these (devices/means) a Chremes or a Pheidon leaves out, he is hissed off (the stage); however to Peleus and to Teucrus it is allowed to do this.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the introduction to this volume.

We do not know the context in which the comparison takes place, who is speaking, how seriously and/or ironically this statement was intended. However, the very fact of this deliberate generic juxtaposition of tragedy and comedy reveals that the discourse on the production and reception of dramatic effects on stage was significant in Athens. The specific category 'suspense' is not mentioned, but the playwrights are interested in what we would today call 'the paradox of suspense'. Although the outcome is well-known, this information and its modulation do not reduce the eagerness of the recipient to watch until the end. The effect of such knowledge is mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics* as well (1451b25–26):

[...] ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ γνῶριμα ὀλίγοις γνῶριμά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ὅμως εὐφραίνει πάντας.

Even if the well-known (myths) are known to only a few, however, they give pleasure to everyone.

The juxtaposition of the certainty and uncertainty of the outcome, as well as the criterion of uncertainty as a narrative issue, were discussed by ancient critics in various forms. The nearest form of 'uncertainty' to the modern notion of 'suspense' is the semantic field of 'hanging/suspending' in Greek. The verb in passive voice κρέμασθαι ("to be hung up") and ἀναρτᾶν ("to suspend the recipient's mind") belong here.

The *locus classicus* is the analysis of narrative suspense by the so-called 'Demetrius', the author of the treatise *On style* (2nd cent. BCE – 1st cent. CE). The author comments on suspense discussing the narrative techniques of the 5th/4th-cent. BCE historian Ctesias of Cnidus and his *Persica* (*Eloc.* 216):<sup>15</sup>

δεῖ τὰ γενόμενα οὐκ εὐθὺς λέγειν, ὅτι ἐγένετο, ἀλλὰ κατὰ μικρόν, κρεμώντα τὸν ἀκροατὴν καὶ ἀναγκάζοντα συναγωνιᾶν. τοῦτο ὁ Κτησίας ἐν τῇ ἀγγελίᾳ τῇ περὶ Κύρου τεθνεώτος ποιεῖ. ἐλθὼν γὰρ ὁ ἄγγελος οὐκ εὐθὺς λέγει ὅτι ἀπέθανεν Κύρος παρὰ τὴν Παρυσάτιν [...]. ἀλλὰ πρῶτον μὲν ἡγγεῖλεν, ὅτι νικᾷ, ἡ δὲ ἦσθη καὶ ἡγωνίασεν· μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἐρωτᾷ, βασιλεὺς δὲ πῶς πράττει; ὁ δὲ πέφευγέ φησι [...]. καὶ πάλιν ἐπανερωτᾷ [...]. ὁ δὲ ἄγγελος ἀμείβεται [...]. κατὰ μικρόν καὶ κατὰ βραχὺ προΐων μόλις τὸ δὴ λεγόμενον ἀπέρρηξεν αὐτό, μάλα ῥηθικῶς καὶ ἐναργῶς τὸν τε ἄγγελον ἐμφήνας ἀκουσίως ἀγγελοῦντα τὴν συμφορὰν, καὶ τὴν μητέρα εἰς ἀγωνίαν ἐμβαλὼν καὶ τὸν ἀκούοντα.

One should not say immediately what has happened, but unfold it gradually, keeping the audience hanging and forcing it to share the anguish. This is what Ctesias creates in (the scene with) the report of Cyrus' death. For the messenger having arrived does not immediately say in front of Parysatis that Cyrus died [...]. But first he reported that he won, and she was happy and anxious; then she asks: "How is the king?" and he says: "He escaped" [...].

15 Ctesias, *FGrH* 688 F 24.

Then she asks again [...]. And the messenger replies [...]. Moving forward short step by short step Ctesias finally ‘broke the news’, as the phrase goes, and presented very characteristically and very vividly the messenger’s reluctance to announce the disaster and brought the mother to anguish, which he forced the audience to share.

‘Demetrius’ describes the author’s narrative technique of ‘keeping in uncertainty’ precisely: the historian Ctesias deliberately proceeds gradually (κατὰ μικρόν and κατὰ μικρόν καὶ κατὰ βραχύ), the characters keep on asking repetitious questions (μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἐρωτᾷ, καὶ πάλιν ἐπανερωτᾷ), Ctesias makes his character feel the emotion of joy (ἡ δὲ ἡσθη), but simultaneously this joy is mixed with the crucial emotion of ‘suspense’ or anxiety (καὶ ἡγωνίασεν). ‘Demetrius’ demonstrates that the author Ctesias has a control over his audience due to his own narrative strategies, understanding the impact these strategies would have on his listener/reader to keep him “hanging” (κρεμῶντα τὸν ἀκροατήν) and forcing him to share in the anguish (καὶ ἀναγκάζοντα συναγωνιᾶν).<sup>16</sup>

This vocabulary occurs in the Classical period, although not in such a clearly analytical way. As has been argued before, many ideas of literary criticism take their origin in the discipline of rhetoric, and especially recipient-oriented criticism, as the theory of rhetoric analysed a broad range of techniques for the arrangement of the text in order to affect the recipient on both intellectual and emotional levels.<sup>17</sup> Various concepts and terms of literary criticism originated in rhetoric, and the vocabulary concerning the effect of suspense is remarkable in this respect. The categories of ‘uncertainty’ and ‘suspense’ might be efficient in cinema or literature, but in the genre of judicial speech ‘certainty’ and ‘clarity’ were more effective. Thus in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* 1415a12–14, in the discussion of the prologue in speeches, the effect on the recipient and ‘hanging’ are referred to:

<sup>16</sup> Two of the first comic incarnations of the metaphor of ‘hanging in the air’ on stage are Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and *Birds* (the titles suggest the topicality of ‘hanging’ in and of themselves). In Aristophanes’ *Clouds* (423 BCE) Socrates is talked about but not shown (91–217), both Strepsiades and the spectator waiting to meet Socrates, until the culmination of the suspense is reached and the master himself appears at last suspended in a basket in the air: φέρε, τίς γὰρ οὗτος οὐπὶ τῆς κρεμάθρας ἀνὴρ; (218, “Come on, but who is this man hung from the hook?”). Strepsiades looks up and points at Socrates, as the frequency of deictics suggest (οὗτος οὐπὶ), full of surprise, as emphasized by the particle γὰρ in the question; see Dover 1968, 120, 125; see also Drummen 2017, 96. In the *Birds* the whole concept of hanging is central to the plot and the verb κρέμασθαι is a key word (cf. Ar. Av. 711, 1387). On further techniques of suspense in comedy, see Konstantakos in this volume. Also, on the piecemeal revelation of information as a suspenseful tool (‘cataphora’), see the introduction and Manousakis’ contribution to this volume.

<sup>17</sup> On the significance of rhetoric for literary criticism, see Russell 1967 and Habib 2005, 65–79.

ἐν δὲ τοῖς λόγοις καὶ ἔπεσι δεῖγμά ἐστιν τοῦ λόγου, ἵνα προειδῶσι περὶ οὗ [ἧ] ὁ λόγος καὶ μὴ κρέμῃται ἢ διάνοια· τὸ γὰρ ἀόριστον πλανᾷ.

In (judicial) speeches and in epic verses there is a sample of the argument in order that the recipients may know beforehand what the argument is about, and that their thought may not be kept suspended. For the undefined leads astray.

The co-occurrence of various topics closely linked to 'suspense' in its modern sense is striking here. Firstly, the criterion of uncertainty is crucial. In order to avoid 'hanging' (μὴ κρέμῃται ἢ διάνοια) the recipient of a judicial speech should know the plot/the argument in advance (ἵνα προειδῶσι περὶ οὗ [ἧ] ὁ λόγος). Aristotle emphasizes and explains this idea: for the uncertain is misleading (τὸ γὰρ ἀόριστον πλανᾷ). Aristotle claims in fact that suspense is not good for a judicial speech. Again, what is efficient for tragedy or comedy might be ineffective for a judicial defence.

The second important topic connected to the category 'suspense' here is the opening of the text and the concept of the prologue more generally. Here the core of the plot that will follow is laid out. This is common to the genres of literary fiction and rhetoric, as the theme/argument laid at the outset in rhetoric often also represents the most impressive effect of the whole piece.<sup>18</sup> Aristotle discusses the constituents and the functions of the prologue, the most important of which are to help the recipient follow the argument (Arist. *Rh.* 1415a14–15, ὁ δὸς οὖν ὥσπερ εἰς τὴν χεῖρα τὴν ἀρχὴν ποιεῖ ἐχόμενον ἀκολουθεῖν τῷ λόγῳ) and to awake the emotions (Arist. *Rh.* 1415a34–36, τὰ δὲ πρὸς τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἕκ τε τοῦ εὖνουν ποιῆσαι καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ὀργίσαι), as well as to attract the attention of the recipient (Arist. *Rh.* 1415a36, καὶ ἐνίοτε τὸ προσεκτικὸν ἢ τοῦναντίον).<sup>19</sup> The immediately following passage on the recipient's attention is particularly noteworthy (Arist. *Rh.* 1415a36–1415b24). It is not always useful/expedient/profitable for the author to render the recipient attentive (οὐ γὰρ ἀεὶ συμφέρει ποιεῖν προσεκτικόν), therefore many authors try to induce their audience through laughter (εἰς γέλωτα πειρῶνται προάγειν).<sup>20</sup> Rendering the audience attentive, if this is required, is common to all parts of the composed text (ἔτι τὸ προσεκτικὸς ποιεῖν πάντων τῶν

**18** See Koch 1968, 133; on the function of the prologues in comedy, see further Heß 1953; Arnott 1993; Hollmann 2016, especially 118–132. Note also the criticism of tragic prologues in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (1119–1250).

**19** It has been argued, however, that this part on the emotions might be an interpolation. Cf. Kennedy 1991, 263 n. 193.

**20** On the deliberately provoked laughter as a phenomenon of the recipient-oriented criticism, see the analysis of Ar. *Ra.* 1–20 in Katsis 2017.