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Graeco-Latina Brunensia. 2015, vol. 20, iss. 2, pp. [17]-31

ISSN 1803-7402 (print); ISSN 2336-4424 (online)

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/134628>

Access Date: 02. 12. 2024

Version: 20220831

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NONVERBAL BEHAVIOUR OF CHARACTERS IN THE *ILIAD* AS A FORM OF PROLEPSIS*

In recent years a great effort has been devoted to the study of non-verbal behaviour, especially in the context of communication and interpersonal relations. It is worth pointing out that non-verbal language also plays a crucial role in ancient Greek literature. The goal of this paper is to examine the description of the non-verbal behaviour of the characters in the Iliad within the frame of the theory of oral-formulaic composition of the epos. Gesture could function as a kind of prolepsis – a sign which foreshadows further events. The gestures used as prolepsis convey many more associations than the words uttered by the characters; especially gestures, which are independent or contrary to a character's words, could imply an autonomic message and reveal the events, which go beyond the frame of the episode or even the entire Iliad. The poet applies gestures to enrich the verbal message of the characters and encode additional implications. On the other hand, gestures could depreciate the character's speech as well as disguise its actual meaning. Finally, it should be pointed out that the poet, by application of particular gestures, responds to the expectations and emotions of the listening audience.

Key words: Homer; *Iliad*; prolepsis; nonverbal behaviour; gestures

Scholars involved in Homeric scholarship from antiquity to the present day have tried to examine the way in which Homer stirs the undiminished attention and interest of his audience. The oral poet must arouse powerful emotions and continually draw the audience's attention, which is very difficult in a situation where the performance continues for many hours and the characters are already well-known to the audience, mostly from tradition

* I wish to thank Karol Zieliński for his helpful observations and for reading through all versions of this text, Monika Błażkiewicz and Ita Hilton for correcting my English. I am also very grateful for suggestions for improvement of this paper to the two anonymous reviewers.

and mythology. Homer frequently constructs the plot with the technique of foreshadowing of the future. On the one hand, foreshadowing violates the chronological order of the episodes, but on the other hand, when the poet makes a reference to later action, he arouses the audience's curiosity. Ancient scholiasts were fully aware of Homer's technique of foreshadowing future events; they also made numerous attempts to interpret this approach. According to them, Homer does not want to leave his audience in a state of suspense and thus creates a pleasurable anticipation of upcoming episodes.¹ The most recurring term which occurs in scholia to describe anticipation is the Greek word *προαναφώνησις* – *previous proclamation* (Duckworth, 1931: p. 323). The scholiasts also mention a few other terms, among them the term *πρόληψις*, which is nowadays – but not in the same way as its original usage – applied in studies on poetic diction. In modern Homeric scholarship, prolepsis also draws the attention of great scholars. In reference to the *Iliad*, prolepsis was closely examined by Kraut (1863) and Wieniewski (1924), but rather as proof of the unity of the epos. In narrative discourse, prolepsis was widely applied by narratologist Gérard Genette (1980: pp. 67–79). With regard to Genette, it is possible to distinguish internal and external prolepses. Internal prolepsis refers to action which is included in the frame of the epos (an example from the *Iliad* is the anticipation of Patroclus' death), whereas external prolepsis exceeds a time boundary of the epos (an example from the *Iliad* is the fall of Troy). A person who makes a prolepsis is also very significant: is it a narrator or a character of a poem?² Finally, it should be clearly distinguished whether the prolepsis is a clear foreshadowing or only a general and superficial reference to future events. It is worth emphasizing that occasionally the author employs a kind of false anticipation – for instance, misleading prophecies, unanswered prayers, and so forth – as part of a deliberate strategy practised by the oral poet.³

In spite of its narratological provenance a figure of prolepsis can be successfully applied in studies of oral theory, which Irene de Jong (1997) proves in her wide studies on Homer's poems.

The theory of oral-formulaic composition assumes that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the fruits of a long-term tradition of orally composed literature and someone who we know under the name of Homer not only preformed but also, at the same time, composed the song. He used various techniques

¹ For more comprehensive study of the scholiasts approach, see: Duckworth (1931).

² For a brief description of prolepsis in Homeric poems, see also: De Jong (1997: pp. 319ff.).

³ For more on false anticipation, see: Morrison (1992).

of orally composing the text such as formulae, themes and story-patterns.⁴ One element which played a crucial role in the process of performance was the audience.⁵ The audience was virtually involved in the process of creating the song. The interaction between the poet and the public was extremely important, because the poet received feedback from the public.⁶ As a result, he could modify the length and intricacy depending on the attention of the audience.

It is worth remembering that in the case of oral poetry, we have a specific kind of communicative situation: a person listening to a poem, as opposed to one reading it, cannot turn back to recall particular episodes. A linear method of acquisition explains numerous repetitions of past events and also foreshadowing of future episodes – in this case the poet uses various forms of prolepsis.

The purpose of this paper is to confirm that not only can a verbal message provide anticipation, but the non-verbal behaviour of the main characters in Homer's *Iliad* could also contribute a similar message to the epos or even communicate more than words can say.

By non-verbal behaviour, I mean any non-verbal signals used in communication, such as: gestures, facial expressions, postures and even clothes and the distance between two characters. Usually when I refer to the word *gestures* I mean not only hand gestures but also the motion of the limbs or head-shaking. One can distinguish two types of non-verbal communication: direct and indirect. Direct – when the poet in narration describes the character's gestures, and indirect when the character himself talks about the gesture, which he or someone else has already made. The body language can “enhance, devalue or disguise verbal messages”.⁷ I have decided to divide the gestures with prolepsis into three main groups: gestures which contradict the character's words, gestures in the frame of the formula and sign-gestures.

The first group includes gestures, performed by the main characters of the *Iliad*, which may be considered separately from the characters' words. They could be gestures which contradict the characters' words or gestures

⁴ For more on the oral tradition, see: Lord (1960) and Foley (1997).

⁵ The precursor to research on the relationship between the poet and his audience is Ruth Scodel; see also Scodel (2004).

⁶ See Zieliński (2014), especially chapter 4 (pp. 295–364) about allusions by the oral poet to the audience.

⁷ Lateiner (1995: p. vii). For more on non-verbal behaviour, see Lateiner (1995) and Hall (1966).

which appear before the characters' speeches and, creating suspense, could mislead the audience.

These gestures could imply an autonomic message which goes beyond the frame of the episode and predicts the future deeds of the heroes.

An apt example is the group of gestures presented by Hector's parents – Hecuba and Priam in book 22 of the *Iliad* (Hom. *Il.* 22.33–91). In this scene, Hector left Troy to fight with Achilles, while his parents were begging him not to leave the city. Before proceeding to detailed analysis of this scene, I will briefly cite a general image of supplication in the Homeric epic.⁸ Supplication in the *Iliad* is rarely connected to specific gestures. Among the most common gestures of supplication one can list a situation in which the suppliant touches the chin or beard of the supplicated person with one hand and grasps his knees with the other. This gesture was extremely common, especially on a battlefield, when a soldier was begging for salvation.⁹ The most famous usage of this gesture is presented in the first book of the *Iliad*, when Thetis twice reached for the beard and knees of Zeus, pleading him to gain esteem for her son, Achilles (Hom. *Il.* 1.500–527).

In book 22, although the main sense of Hecuba's and Priam's address is to beg Hector not to enter into combat with Achilles, they make gestures which are traditionally connected with mourning.¹⁰ Priam is groaning, beating his head and tearing his hair out (Hom. *Il.* 22.33–35):¹¹

ᾠμῶξεν δ' ὁ γέρων, κεφαλὴν δ' ὁ γε κόψατο χερσὶν
 ὑπόσ' ἀνασχόμενος, μέγα δ' οἰμῶξας ἐγεγώνει
 λισσόμενος φίλον υἱόν.¹²

The old man groaned aloud and with both hands high uplifted
 beat his head, and groaned amain, and spoke supplicating
 his beloved son (...)

⁸ For more on the Homeric supplications, see Gould (1973), Pedrick (1982) and Crotty (1994).

⁹ Hom. *Il.* 6.45, 10.454, 21.71. For more on the gestures which accompany supplication, see McCartney (1938).

¹⁰ For the first time I pointed out this discrepancy in my master's thesis in 2010. In detail this scene analyzed also Irene de Jong in her new commentary on 22 book of the *Iliad*, see de Jong (2012: 67ff.).

¹¹ Priam ends his lament by anticipating his own death during the fall of Troy, because the existence of the city is inseparably connected with Hector's fate. The hero is the last powerful defender of Troy and his death figuratively initiates the city's sack.

¹² All quotations from this text are from Lattimore, R. (1951). (Transl.). *The Iliad of Homer*. Chicago – London: University of Chicago Press.

Hecuba is wailing, tearing her clothes and baring her breasts (Hom. *Il.* 22.77–81):¹³

Ἦ ῥ' ὁ γέρον, πολιὰς δ' ἄρ' ἀνὰ τρίχας ἔλκετο χερσὶ
 τίλλων ἐκ κεφαλῆς· οὐδ' Ἔκτορι θυμὸν ἔπειθε.
 μήτηρ δ' αὖθ' ἐτέρωθεν ὀδύρετο δάκρυ χέουσα
 κόλπον ἀνιεμένη, ἐτέρηφι δὲ μαζὸν ἀνέσχε·
 καὶ μιν δάκρυ χέουσ' ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·

So the old man spoke, and in his hands seizing the grey hairs
 tore them from his head, but could not move the spirit in Hector.
 And side by side with him his mother in tears was mourning
 and laid the fold of her bosom bare and with one hand held out
 a breast, and wept her tears for him and called to him in winged words

In this example the words of Hector's parents stand in stark contrast to their gestures – they are begging Hector with accompanying mourning gestures.¹⁴ The verb *λίσσομαι* (specifically the participle *λίσσόμενος*) will be used by Priam once again while begging Achilles for Hector's corpse (τὸν καὶ λίσσόμενος Πριάμος πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπε·, “But now Priam spoke to him in the words of a suppliant”; Hom. *Il.* 24.485). Also Athena, in the guise of Hector's brother, recalls their parents' supplication (Hom. *Il.* 22.239–41):

ἠθεῖ ἦ μὲν πολλὰ πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ
 λίσσονθ' ἐξείης γουνούμενοι, ἀμφὶ δ' ἐταῖροι,
 αὖθι μένειν.

“My brother, it is true our father and the lady our mother, taking
 my knees in turn, and my companions about me, entreated
 that I stay within”

¹³ The gesture of beating the breasts is usually connected with lamenting over a person's death (see Alexiou, 1974: pp. 55–56 and especially chapter 4); here Hecuba is baring her breasts in a gesture of grief and supplication. Moreover, she reminds Hector about the power of her maternity: “Ἔκτορ τέκνον ἐμὸν τάδε τ' αἶδσο καὶ μ' ἐλέησον/αὐτήν, εἴ ποτέ τοι λαθικηδέα μαζὸν ἐπέσχον – “Hektor, my child, look upon these and obey, and take pity/ on me, if ever I gave you the breast to quiet your sorrow,” see Pedrick (1982: p. 130). This gesture was further applied in classical tragedy e.g. in *Oresteia*, see: DeForest (1993).

¹⁴ Similar behaviour on the part of the parents can be observed in the scene depicting the mutilation of Hector's corpse by the furious Achilles (Hom. *Il.* 22.405–409), as well as subsequently, during the funeral lament over Hector's body at Troy (Hom. *Il.* 24. 709–795).

In this situation, the gestures indicate the real meaning of this scene and they are logically associated with the inevitable death of Hector.¹⁵ This kind of latent message from the author of epic is particularly significant for an external audience – the audience of the *Iliad*. An external member of an audience has access to a more complete image of events and he could realise that the death of Hector is approaching and inescapable. The gestures could also go beyond time and show the results of the hero's present decision – in our example, the mourning for Hector, notwithstanding the fact that the hero is still alive.

An exemplification of gestures that may mislead an audience is the gesture of Achilles during Priam's supplication. After Hector's death and the mutilation of his corpse by Achilles, the wretched Priam goes to the enemies' camp to ransom his son's body from the Achaeans. Immediately after his arrival at Achilles' tent, Priam kneels down, grasps the hero's knees and kisses his hands. Subsequently the old man makes a speech, pleading with Achilles to ransom Hector's dead body. After Priam's address, the audience is waiting for a response. After a while, the hero answers with a specific gesture – he grasps Priam's hand, pushing it back: ἀψάμενος δ' ἄρα χειρὸς ἀπώσατο ἦκα γέροντα – “He took the old man's hand and pushed him gently away” (Hom. *Il.* 24.508). The element which causes uncertainty is a fact that normally, in former scenes of supplication on the battlefield, pushing back someone's outreached hand means refusal and a murdering of the suppliant.¹⁶ At this moment, the audience may expect that Priam's offer will be rejected and that his desperate gesture of kissing Achilles' hands will incur hero's wrath.

Generally, the real significance of gestures is much more multifaceted than it appears at first glance: on the one hand they are strictly connected with verbal messages – they enhance the words and make them more complex; on the other hand, however, they may incorporate information that triggers associations completely different from the characters' words.

¹⁵ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for his remark about the Homeric simile which precedes the scene of begging. In this simile Achilles is compared to the Sirius star, which is “a sign of evil and brings on the great fever for unfortunate mortals”. The aforementioned simile precisely correlates with the incoming scene – it does not depreciate the meaning of the characters' gestures, but it introduces the public to the general sense of this scene and corresponds with the subsequent emotions and behaviour of Priam and Hecuba. The Homeric similes regularly precede major scenes of the *Iliad* and their correlation with the body language of characters is a topic of a separate article. For more on Homeric similes see Scott (2009).

¹⁶ As in the scene when Menelaos rejects Adrastos' prayer for salvation (Hom. *Il.* 6.62). For more on the response of the one supplicated, see Gould (1973: pp. 78ff).

The second group incorporates gestures which appear in formulae. The formula is the smallest element through which an oral poet builds his story. According to the definition of Milman Parry (1930), the formula is a “group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea”.¹⁷ Among various formulae in the *Iliad*, several formulae occur with descriptions of significant gestures – the poet usually employs these phrases as a prelude to the main character’s speech.¹⁸ Here are the examples that could illustrate the gestures in formulae: *ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν* (*looking darkly*) or *βαρὺ στενάχων* (*groaning heavily*).

The formula *ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν* (*looking darkly*), which occurs 26 times in the Homeric poems was hitherto precisely examined by J. Holoka.¹⁹ He claims that, “to look darkly is to employ a nonverbal cue fraught with judgemental significance. The speaker, whatever his message, transmits by his facial demeanour that an infraction of propriety has occurred” (1983: p. 16). This phrase reveals the speaker’s emotions and his attitude to the adversary. For example, in the scene of the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon (Hom. *Il.* 1.148), the facial expression of the former displays his point of view before he even speaks. “Agamemnon has invalidated the social compact upon which orderly relations among men in the heroic community are predicated, and Achilles is alerting him to his indecorum” (Holoka, 1983: p. 2). Both the external and internal audiences realise that Achilles feels irritated and humiliated and he should respond strongly. In this case, his subsequent words duplicate and enhance the nonverbal message.

Following Holoka’s method of argumentation, it is possible to examine the formula *βαρὺ στενάχων*, which literally means *heavy moaning, groaning heavily*.²⁰ The single verb *στενάχω* (which means *to sigh, to groan, to wail*) frequently occurs in the scenes depicting mourning ritual – relatives heavily sigh and groan over the dead body of a hero.²¹ Besides, there are four occurrences of this expression in variant form *βαρέα στενάχοντα*; in those instances it depicts a fatally wounded warrior groaning on the battlefield

¹⁷ This is the original definition of the formula, subsequently modified by many scholars; however we still do not have an acceptable and suitable equivalent; see Edwards (1997) and Russo (1997).

¹⁸ For more on the prelude to speech, see Couch (1937) and Edwards (1970).

¹⁹ The phrase *ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν* appears usually in speech-introduction and precisely means “looking (out) from beneath (scil. beetling or knit) brows”, Holoka (1983: p. 4, n. 8).

²⁰ I follow here the Holoka’s point of view that even a single phrase as *ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν* could be considered as a formula.

²¹ Priam describes to Achilles his mourning after Hector’s death (Hom. *Il.* 24.639). Achilles groans over his friend’s corpse (Hom. *Il.* 18.318, 19.301). The Trojans and Priam’s family groan after Hector’s death (Hom. *Il.* 22.515, 24.722, 24.746).

(Hom. *Il.* 8.334, 13.423, 13.538, 14.432). The entire phrase *βαρὺ στενάχων* occurs 7 times in the *Iliad*²² (6 times as a prelude to speech). In four instances the formula relates to Achilles, twice in a recurrence of complete verse: *τὴν δὲ βαρὺ στενάχων προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς* – “Sighing heavily Achilles of the swift feet answered her”, when Achilles prays to his mother, Thetis. The other three occurrences refer to Agamemnon (twice) and Achilles’ best friend, Patroklos.

Considering the aforementioned examples, it could be argued that the formula *βαρὺ στενάχων* generally precedes a speech in which a character reveals his prediction of defeat or death. At *Iliad* 1.364, Achilles sighs heavily and subsequently addresses his mother; afterwards Thetis responds to him, mentioning the prophecy connected with his death (Hom. *Il.* 1.417–18):

νῦν δ’ ἅμα τ’ ὠκύμορος καὶ ὀϊζυρὸς περὶ πάντων
ἔπλεο· τὼ σε κακῇ αἴσῃ τέκον ἐν μεγάροισι.

Now it has befallen that your life must be brief and bitter
beyond all men’s. To a bad destiny I bore you in my chambers.

Repeatedly, at *Iliad* 18.78, the hero calls Thetis out and foretells his forthcoming death; he speaks to his mother (Hom. *Il.* 18.88–90):

νῦν δ’ ἵνα καὶ σοὶ πένθος ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μυρίον εἴη
παιδὸς ἀποφθιμένοιο, τὸν οὐχ ὑποδέξεται αὔτις
οἴκαδε νοστήσαντ’ (...)

there must be on your heart a numberless sorrow
for your son’s death, since you can never again receive him
won home again to his country (...)

The theme of Achilles’ death recurs on another two occasions, at *Iliad* 18.330–2 and 23.80–1. The former scene depicts the hero delivering the address to his warriors, the Myrmidons:

(...) ἐπεὶ οὐδ’ ἐμὲ νοστήσαντα
δέξεται ἐν μεγάροισι γέρον ἱππηλάτα Πηλεὺς
οὐδὲ Θέτις μήτηρ, ἀλλ’ αὐτοῦ γαῖα καθέξει

(...) since I shall never come home, and my father,
Peleus the aged rider, will not welcome me in his great house,
nor Thetis my mother, but in this place the earth will receive me

while in the latter episode Patroklos’ spectre speaks to Achilles:

²² Hom. *Il.* 1.364, 4.153, 9.16, 16.20, 18.78, 18.323, 23.60.

καὶ δὲ σοὶ αὐτῷ μοῖρα, θεοῖς ἐπιείκελ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
τείχει ὑπο Τρώων εὐηφενέων ἀπολέσθαι.

And you, Achilles like the gods, have your own destiny;
to be killed under the wall of the prospering Trojans

In every instance of referring the formula *βαρὺ στενάχων* to Achilles, the prolepsis in nonverbal behaviour precludes the foreshadowing in the verbal evocation of his anticipated death. The one reference to Patroklos is a little unlikely, because the narrator mentions that Achilles' comrade groaned heavily during his conversation with Achilles, addressing Patroklos directly: Τὸν δὲ βαρὺ στενάχων προσέφησ Πατρόκλεες ἱππεῦ· – “Then groaning heavily, Patroklos the rider, you answered” (Hom. *Il.* 16.20) and a few verses later the poet adds, predicting his death (Hom. *Il.* 16.46–7):

Ὡς φάτο λισσόμενος μέγα νήπιος· ἦ γὰρ ἔμελλεν
οἷ αὐτῷ θάνατόν τε κακὸν καὶ κῆρα λιτέσθαι.

So he spoke supplicating in his great innocence; this was
his own death and evil destruction he was entreating.

Two references related to the leader of the Achaeans, Agamemnon, foreshadow his fear and anxiety about the death of his brother, Menelaos, and the Greeks' defeat in the Trojan War. In *Iliad* 4 Agamemnon is worrying about his wounded brother Menelaos (Hom. *Il.* 4.153–4):²³

τοῖς δὲ βαρὺ στενάχων μετέφη κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων
χειρὸς ἔχων Μενέλαον, ἐπεστενάχοντο δ' ἑταῖροι.

Agamemnon the powerful spoke to them, groaning heavily, and by the hand held
Menelaos, while their companions were mourning beside them.

And later (Hom. *Il.* 4.169–70):

ἀλλὰ μοι αἰνὸν ἄχος σέθεν ἔσσεται ὦ Μενέλαε
αἶ κε θάνης καὶ μοῖραν ἀναπλήσης βιότοιο –

But I shall suffer a terrible grief for you, Menelaos
if you die and fill out the destiny of your lifetime;

²³ Although subsequently it appears that the wound is not lethal, the characters do not know it at the moment. Therefore their fear about the Menelaos' life is well-founded in case of the possibility that the Trojans used poisoned arrows – as when Philoctetes lethally wounded Paris in the ankle or when Paris' arrow killed Achilles. For more on the topic of poisoned arrows and wounds, see Zieliński (2014: pp. 257f.).

And afterwards, in *Iliad* 9, he foretells the Achaeans' failure (Hom. *Il.* 9.27–8):

φεύγωμεν σὺν νηυσὶ φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν·
οὐ γὰρ ἔτι Τροίην αἰρήσομεν εὐρύγυιαν.

let us run away with our ships to the beloved land of our fathers
since no longer now shall we capture Troy of the wide ways.

To sum up we may say that all instances of the formula *βαρὺ στενάχων* are connected with subsequent speeches, in which the characters consider their tragic fate and the Homeric audience were fully aware of these implications.

However the formula is the smallest unit which helps the oral poet to organise the structure of his poem, and it has a more relevant application – it has its independent, semantic meaning. The formula is a type of sign for an audience: it indicates a proper sense of the following scene and additionally it evokes specific emotions which accompany the speech and entire scene.

The last group of gestures I call *sign-gestures*, because these gestures convey a hidden meaning. They could also carry an alternative name, *independent gestures*, since it seems that there is no direct connection between the words spoken by the characters or by the poet with the semantic meaning of these gestures and their connotations.

A perfect example illustrating this group is the gesture of thigh-slapping, which has been extensively researched by Steven Lowenstam in his book *The Death of Patroklos: A Study in Typology* (1981). The author presents the usage of this gesture in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* with its context, and his conclusion is extraordinary: he claims that the gesture of thigh-slapping is not only a literal way to reveal someone's grief, but, additionally, is the beginning of a sequence of events leading directly to the death of the person who has slapped his thighs. Of course, the gesture of thigh-slapping should not be examined separately, without its context and some specific words. However, these words are not a clear explanation, but they function as traditional or even formulaic words which evoke particular associations. There is also a following gesture of striking someone with a down-turned hand. Lowenstam quotes two passages – first, *Iliad* 16.791–2:

στῆ δ' ὀπιθεν, πλῆξεν δὲ μετάφρενον εὐρέε τ' ὤμω
χειρὶ καταπρηγεῖ, στρεφεδίνθηεν δέ οἱ ὄσσε.

“He stood behind and struck
his back and wide shoulders with a down-turned hand,
and his eyes whirled”

and second, *Iliad* 15.397–8:

ῥμωξέν τ' ἄρ' ἔπειτα καὶ ὠ πεπλήγετο μηρῶ
 χερσὶ καταπρηγέσσ', ὀλοφουρόμενος δ' ἔπος ἠῦδα·

“Then he groaned and slapped his thighs with down-turned hands and lamenting, he made a speech”

Subsequently after a profound examination he proves that those two gestures are highly complementary: “In the first passage, Apollo slaps Patroklos, an action which allows Euphorbos and Hektor to kill him; while in the second passage Patroklos slaps his thighs, which, as I have suggested, is an omen of death. With similar diction the first passage depicts the fulfilment of what is foreshadowed in the second” (Lowenstam, 1981: p. 38). The phenomenon of the foreshadowing of Patroklos’ death emerges from the fact that in this scene nobody mentions this death, neither a hero, nor the poet – but the audience perfectly understand the allusion and all the consequences of this scene.

I have found a few examples of gestures – signs which indicate a special meaning without any commentary of poet or character himself. An adequate illustration of such a gesture could be a scene from book 22 of the *Iliad*, in which Hector’s wife, Andromache, is compared to a maenad.²⁴ In this scene, Andromache is weaving a decorative robe and awaits her husband’s return from the battlefield. Her work is interrupted by the turmoil coming from outside the fortifications. Andromache drops her shuttle and her knees start to shudder with fright. After a while, when she hears wailing and groaning, she comprehends that her beloved husband, Hector, has died. Subsequently, she runs out of the chamber like a mad woman and climbs the fortress tower (ὡς φαμένη μεγάροιο διέσσυτο μαινάδι ἴση – “So she spoke, and ran out of the house like a raving woman”, Hom. *Il.* 22.460). A similar scene occurs in *Iliad* 6 – before leaving Troy, Hector is willing to bid his wife farewell. While looking for Andromache he encounters her servant who recounts that Andromache ran out of the chamber, like a mad woman, even without her little son (Hom. *Il.* 6.388–9):

ἦ μὲν δὴ πρὸς τεῖχος ἐπειγομένη ἀφικάνει
 μαινομένη ἔικυϊα· φέρει δ' ἅμα παῖδα τιθήνη.

²⁴ I analyzed this scene more profoundly in my previous article: *On Madness without Words: Gestures in Homer’s poems as a Nonverbal Means of Depicting Madness*, Chruściak (2013).

Therefore she has gone in speed to the wall, like a woman gone mad, and a nurse attending her carries the baby.

By calling Andromache a maenad, the poet evokes associations with a bacchante participating in ancient rituals related to the cult of Dionysus. Andromache's entire behaviour (rough moves, fainting, running in a rush, climbing the walls of the city as if climbing a mountain, abandoning her infant son) resembles the behaviour of a woman in a Bacchic frenzy. Homer creates a chain of associations: the veil that falls off Andromache's head symbolises the end of her successful marriage with Hector. According to the theory of Richard Seaford maenadism is the antithesis of marriage and Dionysus plays a crucial role in the disintegration of the household (Seaford, 1993). The audience, which was acquainted with the ancient rituals and mythology, was fully aware of all the connotations implied in this scene and detailed explanations were virtually redundant.

Bearing in mind the examples discussed above, one can distinguish a second level of narration that is invisible at first glance, but should be readily deciphered by the audience.

The body language of the characters in the *Iliad* can "replace, duplicate, or complement" their words (Lateiner, 1995: p. vii). The gestures which are antithetical to the character's words are strictly connected with proximate scenes: the mourning gestures of Hector's parents directly precede the hero's death. The upcoming events are unavoidable and – in a verbal way – foreshadowed by the poet several times beforehand. Some gestures can mislead the public, as the gesture of Achilles during his confrontation with his enemy, the old king Priam, creating suspense and increasing the emotion of fear, in both the internal and external audiences.

In the case of gestures expressed in formulae, the characters' nonverbal language both duplicates and enhances their subsequent verbal message. Moreover, gestures in formulae related to the current scene are accompanied by strong emotions. The role of gestures in oral epic is not only to imitate reality, but also to involve the feelings and emotions of the audience. The poet, using a wide range of particular gestures that accompany a given scene, conveys an extremely emotional message, which impacts on the recipient of the oral poet. The Homeric audience could feel curiosity, fear and relief or, on the other hand, lassitude and discouragement. The success of the oral performance – the audience's interest – relies on the poet's skills and his ability to amaze the audience despite its awareness of the poem's end.

Gestures which play the role of signs usually foreshadow events in the distant future (as in the example of Patroklos' death); sometimes those events go beyond the frame of the story of Homer's *Iliad* (as the slavery

of Hector's wife, after the fall of Troy). Frequently, these gestures are not accompanied by words, so the audience must find the additional meaning. It could be pointed out that the one important advantage of gestures over words is that within a moment, one gesture may convey plenty of implications whereas the same implications need to be uttered by many words. One particular gesture could evoke the right connotations, readily decoded by the public, who were familiar with the religious rituals, traditions and mythologies. The Homeric audience was highly capable of decoding the hidden meanings during the process of an oral performance; however, some of the listeners could settle for only the literal meaning of the gestures depicted by the poet. The most frequently evoked prolepses in the *Iliad* are those connected with the heroes' death; hence it is no surprise that the poet also implemented the same kind of foreshadowing in the nonverbal language, notwithstanding the fact that the hidden meaning of gestures must be decoded by the audience. Assuming that the audience to the oral poem is involved in deciphering the prolepses encoded in the gestures, it detects the future events before they occur in the main narration as well as uncovering their broad, symbolic sense. Ancient Greek poetry was inextricably associated with music, dance, recitation and activity. Gestures accompanied people in everyday life and thus occur frequently in literature. It is also possible that the poet during his performance made some specific gestures.

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