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THE EPIC SCOWL: A NOTE ON THE METONYMIC BASIS AND CONTEXTUAL MEANING OF THE FORMULA ὑπόδρα ἰδών*

Drawing on the perspectives of cognitive linguistics and evolutionary biology, this contribution revisits the meaning of the Homeric formula ὑπόδρα ἰδών, literally ‘looking from below’, which is generally acknowledged as an indication of anger in epic poetry. A detailed examination of the phrase suggests that the facial expression it refers to was originally an inclination of the head while maintaining a fixed gaze ahead, resulting in a view from beneath lowered brows. It is argued that this position of the head serves as a functional preparation for a physical conflict, and consequently that the epic phrase ὑπόδρα ἰδών is not merely a metonym for anger but also a signal of the willingness to resort to violence if the conflict is not resolved by other means. This is also borne out by the contexts in which the formula occurs, since in most cases the speeches introduced with a ‘look from below’ are either followed by violent actions or cause their addressee to retract the offence.

Keywords: Greek epic poetry, formulaic language, Homeric Greek, metonymy, facial expression, vision, aggression, heroism, ὑπόδρα ἰδών

Für Antonia Penthesileia (geb. 2022)

One of the well-known and typical formulae of Homeric epic poetry is the participial phrase ὑπόδρα ἰδών.¹ From the contexts in which it

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¹ There are twenty-seven occurrences in our extant material, always positioned before the penthemimeral caesura. Seventeen are in the *Iliad*: *Il.* 1.148; 2.245; 4.349, 411; 5.251, 888; 10.446; 12.230; 14.82; 15.13; 17.141, 169; 18.284; 20.428; 22.260, 344; 24.559; nine in the *Odyssey*: *Od.* 8.165; 17.459; 18.14, 337, 388; 19.70; 22.34, 60, 320; and one in the *Homeric Hymn* to Dionysus: *Hym. Hom.* 7.48. There is only one attested application to a female character, in [Hes.] *Sc.* 445: ὑπόδρα ἰδοῦσα. The beginning of the line typically provides the direct object of

occurs the formula has been shown to be an indication of righteous anger or indignation,² and is apparently in itself sufficient to indicate the speaker's anger or annoyance without further references to his emotional state other than the context and the content of the subsequent speech.³ The phrase is most commonly translated as 'looking darkly' and obviously denotes a way of looking, which I will proceed to define and discuss in more detail.

As vision is the primary human sense, the eyes in general are an expressive means of non-verbal communication and an indicator of one's mood and psychological state. In particular, ferocity and anger or displeasure are often conveyed by references to the eyes in Archaic epic poetry, usually in combination with the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS FIRE (often in the form of short similes). For example:

...μένεος δὲ μέγα φρένες ἀμφιμέλαινα
 πίμπλαντ', ὅσσε δέ οἱ πυρὶ λαμπετόωντι εἴκτην.
 (Hom. *Il.* 1.103–4; *Od.* 4.661–2)⁴

...his dark heart was filled to the brim with fury,
 and his two eyes were like flashing fire.

...ὡς μιν μάλλον ἔδν χόλος, ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε
 δεινὸν ὑπὸ βλεφάρων ὡς εἰ σέλας ἐξεφάανθεν· (Hom. *Il.* 19.16–17)

the participle in the form of a pronoun, and the adverb + participle phrase is usually followed by a verb of speech introduction, with an epithet + proper name combination in the nominative. For the structure of the formulaic speech introductions in which the formula occurs, see J. P. Holoka, "'Looking Darkly'" (ΥΠΟΔΡΑ ΙΔΩΝ): Reflections on Status and Decorum in Homer', *TAPA* 113 (1983), 3 n. 6. J. Griffin, 'Homeric Words and Speakers', *JHS* 106 (1986), 43, notes that the phrase always occurs in the third person, never in the first, and hence 'it was felt to be appropriate only to the impersonal narrator'.

² On the meaning and usage of the formula, see esp. Holoka (n. 1), e.g. 3–4: 'υπόδρα ιδών conveys anger on the part of a speaker who takes umbrage at what he judges to be rude or inconsiderate words spoken by the addressee'. See also G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad. A Commentary, Vol. I: Books 1–4* (Cambridge, 1985), 68, ad *Il.* 1.148–71: 'a formula associated with speech and expressing extreme displeasure and rebuke'. This meaning also accounts for the singular occurrence with a female participle in [Hes.] *Sc.* 445, where the phrase is applied not to a mortal woman but to Athena angrily addressing Ares, since anger appears to be a predominantly male emotion in heroic epic poetry.

³ On this 'traditional referentiality' of υπόδρα ιδών as denoting anger, see also J. M. Foley, *Homer's Traditional Art* (University Park, PA, 1999), 20.

⁴ Quotes of Greek text from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* follow the editions of H. van Thiel (ed.), *Homeri Ilias*, second edition (Hildesheim, 2010), and H. van Thiel (ed.), *Homeri Odyssea* (Hildesheim, 1991); the scholia are quoted from H. van Thiel, *Scholia D in Iliadem*, second edition (Cologne, 2014) (available online at <<https://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/5586/1/vanthiel.pdf>>). English translations are, with minor adaptations, taken from A. Verity (trans.), *Homer, The Iliad* (Oxford, 2011), and A. Verity (trans.), *Homer, The Odyssey* (Oxford, 2016).

*...the more bitterness entered into him, and his eyes
flashed out terribly below their lids, like a flame.*

...ῥοσοισιν πυρὶ λαμπομένοισι δεδορκώς· ([Hes.] Sc. 145)⁵

...glaring with eyes shining like fire.

The masculine aorist participle ἰδών, from the root *(F)ιδ-, functions as the suppletive aorist stem of the verb ὀράω, ‘(to) see’, and clearly describes some form of viewing action.⁶ But, in contrast with all instances of angry looks cited above, the participle construction ὑπόδρα ἰδών does not make explicit mention of the eyes and therefore apparently does not refer to a specific expression in them (such as ‘flashing eyes’ or ‘eyes of fire’). In light of the absence of any reference to the eyes, we can surmise that the formula describes a particular way of looking which likely gains its expressiveness from a certain position of the eyelids, the eyebrows, or the head. To determine the facial expression denoted by the phrase, we must investigate the concomitant adverb ὑπόδρα, which does not occur in any other context than this specific formula, but is generally understood as an indication of anger and usually not given much attention beyond that. Hence, even though (or because) the contextual meaning of ὑπόδρα ἰδών is well established, the precise literal meaning has not been accounted for sufficiently and deserves revision as to which expression the formula refers to and why it indicates anger.

The meaning (or at least the contextual meaning) was apparently obvious to the scholiasts and thus not deserving of closer attention, since the scholia merely offer a brief paraphrase, but no exhaustive explanation of the phrase:

ὑπόδρα ἰδών· δεινὸν ὑποβλεψάμενος (Σ D ad II. 1.148)

ὑπόδρα ἰδών: looking terribly with hostility

⁵ Quotes from the Hesiodic corpus follow the edition of F. Solmsen (ed.), *Hesiodi opera*, third edition (Oxford, 1990). English translations are taken from the Loeb editions of G. W. Most, *Hesiod I. Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), and *Hesiod II. The Shield, Catalogue of Women, Other Fragments* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

⁶ See H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg, 1960–70), i.708–9, s.v. ἰδεῖν; P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1968), 455, s.v. ἰδεῖν; or R. S. P. Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 2 vols. (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2010), 577, s.v. ἰδεῖν.

The periphrasis of the scholia replaces the adverb ὑπόδρα with the adverbial accusative δεινόν, ‘terribly’ (see also *Il.* 15.13: δεινὰ δ’ ὑπόδρα ἰδών; *Hym. Hom.* 7.48: δεινὸν ὑπόδρα ἰδών), which is undoubtedly contextually correct but nevertheless obviously not what the adverb really (that is, literally) refers to.⁷ The etymology of the adverb ὑπό–δρα has been explained as a composition of the prepositional preverb ὑπο-, ‘under’ or ‘(from) below’,⁸ and the verbal root *δρακ-, the aorist of δέρκομαι, usually poetic, meaning ‘(to) look’.⁹ Notably, the simplex verb δέρκομαι occurs particularly often to describe a grim, menacing, or intimidating stare (e.g. *Hom. Il.* 3.342; 11.37; 17.675; 22.95; 23.477, 815; *Od.* 19.446; *Hym. Hom.* 19.14; 31.9; *Hes. Theog.* 828; [*Hes.*] *Sc.* 145, 160, 236),¹⁰ even though this appears not to have been inherent in its basic meaning,¹¹ since in these cases it usually occurs in conjunction with adverbs indicating ferocity, such as δεινόν (*Hom. Il.* 3.342; 11.37; 23.815; [*Hes.*] *Sc.* 160), ἄγρια ([*Hes.*] *Sc.* 236), ὄξέα/ὄξύτατον (*Hym. Hom.* 19.14/*Hom. Il.* 17.675; 23.477), or σμερνόν/σμερδαλέον (*Hym. Hom.* 31.9/*Hom. Il.* 22.9). Therefore, based on its etymology, the adverb ὑπό–δρα literally means ‘below-glancing’,¹² and it has been generally accepted that this means a ‘glance from below’ rather than a ‘look under something’.¹³

⁷ See T. Rakoczy, *Böser Blick, Macht des Auges und Neid der Götter. Eine Untersuchung zur Kraft des Blickes in der griechischen Literatur* (Tübingen, 1996), 44.

⁸ Frisk (n. 6), ii.971, s.v. ὑπο, ὑπό; Chantraine (n. 6), 1160, s.v. ὑπο, ὑπό; and Beekes (n. 6), 1535, s.v. ὑπο, ὑπο, who traces the adverb/preposition back to Indo-European *υρο, ‘below, under’.

⁹ See esp. E. Risch, *Wortbildung der homerischen Sprache*, second edition (Berlin and New York, 1974), 364 §128a; Frisk (n. 6), ii.972, s.v. ὑπόδρα; Chantraine (n. 6), 1160, s.v. ὑπόδρα; or Beekes (n. 6), 1536, s.v. ὑπόδρα, as well as most recently R. Xian, ‘An Etymological Note on Homeric ὑπόδρα’, *GRBS* 57 (2017), 261.

¹⁰ *Lfgre* ii.251–2, s.v. δέρκομαι.

¹¹ Frisk (n. 6), i.368, s.v. δέρκομαι; Chantraine (n. 6), 264–5, s.v. δέρκομαι; and Beekes (n. 6), 317–18, s.v. δέρκομαι, who traces the verb to an Indo-European root *derk-, ‘see’. See also the assertion in B. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen*, ninth edition (Göttingen, 2009), 14, that δέρκομαι means ‘(to) look with a certain expression’ (‘δερκεσθαι ist “mit einem bestimmten Ausdruck blicken”’), but that the specifics of the expressions have to be determined from context.

¹² The explanation of ὑπόδρα in the lexicon of Hesychius also suggests that the connection to the idea of ‘looking’ was already inherent in the adverb: see Hsch. υ 612: ὑπόδρα: ὑποβλεψόμενος, <ὑπο>βλεπτικῶς (quoted from K. Latte [ed.], *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon*, rev. P. A. Hansen and I. C. Cunningham [Berlin and New York, 2009]).

¹³ See e.g. Holoka (n. 1), 4 n. 8; Kirk (n. 2), 68 ad *Il.* 1.148–71; S. Pulleyn (ed. and trans.), *Homer. Iliad I. Edited with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford, 2000), 166, ad *Il.* 1.148: ‘This adverb seems to be composed from ὑπό and the root found in the verb ἔδροκον (aor. of δέρκομαι). It implies that Achilles is looking at Agamemnon from beneath a furrowed, lowered brow.’ See also J. Latacz, R. Nünlist, and M. Stoevesandt, *Homers Ilias. Gesamtkommentar (Basler Kommentar). Band I: Erster Gesang (A). Faszikel 2: Kommentar*, third edition (Berlin and New York, 2009), 77, ad *Il.* 1.148: ‘eigtl. “mit einem Blick von unten schauend”; ὑπόδρα < *ὑπό–δρακ zu ὑποδέρκομαι’. R. J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric*

The k-*auslaut* of the root *δρακ- is apparent in the later Hellenistic variation ὑπόδραξ ἰδών (see Callim. frg. 194.101, 374.1; Nic. *Ther.* 457, 765), which was presumably coined to avoid the hiatus originally prevented by the initial digamma of *Φιδών. As a result, the traditional Homeric formula ὑπόδρα ἰδών, which in the transmitted form constitutes a metrical irregularity, is likely of considerable antiquity, since its formation presupposes the existence of the digamma.

The angry expression to which this formula refers has often been interpreted as a frown,¹⁴ that is, a furrowing of the brows, but there is no explicit reference to a movement of the eyebrows and the etymology ‘looking from below’ suggests a scowl or a glower,¹⁵ namely an angry stare from beneath lowered (rather than furrowed) brows.¹⁶ One might additionally imagine a furrowing of the brows, but this movement of the eyebrows alone does not cause a ‘glance from below’, so the main characteristic of the phrase appears to be the indication of lowered brows resulting from an inclination of the head while keeping the gaze fixed at the object of viewing. The phrase certainly does not describe a lowering of the gaze or the breaking of eye contact, since both are commonly recognized and interpreted as signs of submission. Additionally, there is no evidence from the contexts in which the formula occurs that the facial expression described by ὑπόδρα ἰδών in any way changes the direction of the gaze or might denote a view upwards from a physically lower position.

Dialect, second edition (Norman, OK, 1963, first published 1924), 399, s.v. ὑπόδρα, was not able to identify the second component, even though he did provide the correct meaning: ‘ὑπόδρα [ὑπο- + uncertain second element] (Looking) from beneath (the eyebrows), with a scowl’. Though also semantically possible, to my knowledge it has never been suggested that ὑπό-δρα might mean ‘looking below’, with the first part describing the direction of the look, and denoting a downward glance. This is likely due to the fact that ‘looking down at/on something’ is generally taken as a sign of contempt rather than anger.

¹⁴ See e.g. Holoka (n. 1), 4 n. 8, who states, without discussion or additional explanation: ‘The actual facial expression signified by ὑπόδρα ἰδών is quite unmistakable: “looking (out) from beneath (scil. beetling or knit) brows”.’ This interpretation has generally been accepted, most recently by Xian (n. 9), 263.

¹⁵ Note that there is no English word which exactly captures the literal meaning of ὑπόδρα ἰδών: ‘(to) scowl’ is often used synonymously with frown (see *OED*, s.v. ‘scowl’: ‘frown in an angry or bad-tempered way’); and ‘(to) glower’ does not explicitly describe the manner of the angry expression (see *OED*, s.v. ‘glower’: ‘have an angry or sullen look on one’s face’).

¹⁶ *Lfgre* iv.757–8, s.v. ὑπόδρα: ‘scowlingly vel sim. indicating a looking out from under brows drawn down in an expression of great displeasure, anger’. Note that physiologically swivelling the eyes upwards would also cause a look from under the eyebrows; however, the resulting expression does not primarily signal anger, and the visual field moves upwards as well, yet usually the angry person and the object of his anger are imagined as being face to face rather than at a difference in height.

Typically, the person to whom the formula is attributed and the recipient of the angry stare are at approximately the same height, so the expression of ὑπόδρα ἰδών must arise from an inclination of the head, which automatically entails a lowering of the brows, but with an upward movement of the eyes in compensation, to keep the gaze steady and directed at the object of anger – resulting in an angry ‘look from beneath lowered brows’, a ‘look from below’.

After this literal, physiological meaning has been established, we are left with the conclusion that the adverb only refers to a certain type of looking, which does not explicitly and literally provide the notion of anger apparently inherent in the formula. Yet the collocation must, at the time of its coinage, have had a certain semantic force and have referred to a specific concrete idea, even if the original meaning has become ‘frozen’ in formulaic usage. Therefore, it is necessary to ask why this particular type of glance was deemed apt to metonymically denote the emotion of anger displayed by the subject of the formula. The phrase must be an instance of the conceptual metonymy EFFECT FOR CAUSE, with the more specific variation EXPRESSIVE RESPONSE FOR THE EMOTION, which is common in descriptions of emotions and employs a co-present subevent as a means to represent the whole complex event.¹⁷ An Anglophone example would be the usage of the verb ‘(to) blush’ (the effect), as a means to indicate the complex emotion of shame (the cause). Hence, the adverb ὑπόδρα must refer to a specific way of ‘looking from below’ which suggests anger and displeasure.

To the best of my knowledge, only one interpretation of the facial expression has been offered so far, arguing that a look ‘from below’ is a form of giving one’s opponent the ‘evil eye’:

The adverb qualifies the direction of the stare, meaning ‘looking from below’ or ‘with a glance from below’. This markedly differs from the ‘usual’ straight look into the face of the person opposite. This deviation from the straight line appears to endow the angry stare with a stronger expression and heightened effect and is similar to the evil, envious stare which is also characterized by a slant: ὑπόδρα is synonymous with the later λοξός, ‘slanting’, ‘oblique’, which is clearly connected to the evil eye, the envious or noxious stare...The look receives its sinister power from the deviance from the straight, especially since it is already emotionally charged with anger.¹⁸

¹⁷ On emotion metonymies, see esp. Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor and Emotion. Language, Culture and Body in Human Feeling* (Cambridge, 2000), 5, 133–4, 171–2, 176–7.

¹⁸ Rakoczy (n. 7), 44–5 (my translation), who accepts the established etymology but discounts the common German translation of the stare as ‘dark’ (German ‘finster blicken’), since this contradicts the usual ‘fiery stare’ of anger (see the examples above): ‘Dieses Adverb qualifiziert

However, Rakoczy's plausible interpretation of the cultural significance of the 'oblique stare' might apply to later occurrences of λοξός but can hardly account for the origin of the physical act which led to the coining of the formulaic metonymy ὑπόδρα ἰδών.¹⁹ Taking the formula and its etymology literally, it refers to the act of looking out from beneath lowered (and possibly, but not necessarily, furrowed²⁰) brows due to an inclination of the head, which in non-verbal communication has been found to be one of the facial expressions of anger and aggression.²¹

It has been a matter of debate whether facial expressions of emotion are universal, but, even if they were, the origin of individual facial expressions and gestures would be difficult to determine and impossible to prove definitely.²² However, in the case of ὑπόδρα ἰδών an explanation of this physical indication of anger from its presumable evolutionary-biological significance might be forthcoming. Inclining

stattdessen die Richtung des Blicks und bedeutet soviel wie "von unten her blickend", "mit einem Blick von unten". Das hebt sich deutlich ab von dem sonst "üblichen" geraden Blick ins Gesicht des Gegenüber. Das Abweichen von der Geraden scheint dem wütenden Blick also irgendwie einen stärkeren Ausdruck, mehr Wirkkraft zu verleihen, und zum bösen, neidischen Blick, für den diese Schräge gleichfalls charakteristisch ist, besteht hier eine auffallende Strukturparallele: ὑπόδρα ist gleichbedeutend mit dem späteren λοξός, "schräg", welches sich eindeutig mit dem bösen, neidischen oder schadenden Blick verbinden lässt. . . Die Ablenkung von der Geraden verleiht ihm eine sinistrale Kraft, zumal er durch den Zorn ohnehin schon emotional aufgeladen ist.' This connection to a noxious intent is also suggested by the variant reading of Hsch. v 612: βλαπτικός, mentioned only in the *apparatus criticus* in Latte, rev. Hansen and Cunningham (n. 12).

¹⁹ Without making this explicit, Rakoczy (n. 7), 44–5, interprets ὑπόδρα as a metaphor rather than a metonymy, presupposing a coordinate conceptual metaphor STRAIGHT IS GOOD VERSUS OBLIQUE IS BAD, resulting in the explanation of an 'oblique stare' being an expression of the 'evil eye'.

²⁰ There is no way of proving that the formula ὑπόδρα ἰδών cannot and does not refer to furrowed brows, since this also results in a disapproving or critical, if not openly hostile, facial expression. However, as I hope to have shown above, based on the etymology of the phrase, a furrowed brow is unlikely to be the primary characteristic of this facial expression, which I take to be the inclination of the head while keeping the gaze steady – this might well be combined with a furrowing of the brows and/or an additional narrowing of the eyes. (The field of vision is necessarily narrowed by a lowering of the brows, but this appears to be part of the function of this facial expression: on this aspect, see n. 21.)

²¹ While a lowered gaze and the breaking of eye contact usually implies submission, the lowering of the brows while maintaining eye contact is an acknowledged non-verbal sign of anger and aggression. See, e.g. C. G. Kohler, T. Turner, N. M. Stolar, W. B. Bilker, C. M. Brensinger, and R. E. Gur, 'Differences in Facial Expressions of Four Universal Emotions', *Psychiatry Research* 128 (2004), 241: 'In Anger faces, we found characteristic expressions to consist of furrowed – or lowered – eyebrows'. See also the pictures presenting facial expressions of anger in the collection of P. Ekman and W. V. Friesen, *Pictures of Facial Affect* (Palo Alto, CA, 1976), where, in addition to a narrowing of the eyes, the brow line is usually distinctly lower than in expressions of other emotions.

²² See n. 34 below.

one's head and thereby lowering one's brows (probably but not necessarily in combination with a narrowing of the eyes²³) is an instinctive action which protects the eyes with the supraorbital ridge, as well as making the lowered chin protect the vulnerable throat and larynx.²⁴ It is therefore not only a reflex of anger but more specifically a functional preparation of the body for an imminent physical conflict.²⁵ Even though the purpose of this position is defensive in the first instance rather than overtly aggressive (insofar as it is aimed at minimizing one's own injuries in an impending confrontation rather than inflicting damage on the opponent), it also serves as preparation prior to an attack and the instigation of violence. As such, the facial gesture certainly suggests not only an expectation of imminent violence but also belligerence and a willingness to initiate a physical altercation. In modern boxing (and other combat sports which allow either strikes to the head or attacks to the neck by choking), the common advice to 'keep one's chin down' reflects the significance of this head position, which is designed to redirect incoming blows to the comparatively robust frontal bone rather than the vulnerable zygomatic and nasal bones, thereby minimizing damage when receiving strikes to the skull, or avoiding getting choked by offering only minimal access to the neck. The necessity of maintaining eye contact in order to focus attention on the opponent for an impending attack despite the inclination of the head, and the resulting squint, produce the aggressive 'glance from below'.

This supposed physical origin of the phrase ὑπόδρα ἰδών provides additional significance to its occurrences in epic poetry. The formula

²³ See n. 20 above.

²⁴ Homeric epic is well aware of the vulnerability of the throat and neck: see esp. *Il.* 22.324–5: ἤ κληῖδες ἀπ' ὀμων ἀγχέν' ἔχουσι, | λαυκανίης, ἵνα τε ψυχῆς ὀκίστος ὄλεθρος ('the place where the collarbones hold the shoulders from the neck, the gullet, where death comes quickest').

²⁵ Note also that experiments have shown that a lowered brow is associated often with male faces. See R. Campbell, P. J. Benson, S. B. Wallace, S. Doesbergh, and M. Coleman, 'More about Brows: How Poses That Change Brow Position Affect Perceptions of Gender', *Perception* 28 (1999), 492: 'However, an image-based model predicts that if brow–lid distance enters into these decisions there should be a systematic effect of brow movement: smaller brow–lid distance (lowered brow, lowered head) should bias classification (faster, more accurate) in favour of male faces, while greater brow–lid distance should lead to a similar effect for female faces.' This could be attributed to the suggestion of aggression presented by this expression; see *ibid.*, 503: 'We speculate that displays of gender and of intention have developed in an inter-active fashion, to take advantage of a perceptual mechanism that can be tricked by one (intention) in processing the other (gender), and that this could be a basis for the present form of several facial displays. These could include "aggression" and "resolution" for the lowered-brow male face...'. See also the comment on [Hes.] *Sc.* 445 in n. 2 above.

appears not only to denote anger and displeasure at an infraction (as has been argued by Holoka) but also to contain a threat of imminent physical aggression, an interpretation which is also borne out by an examination of the contexts in which the phrase occurs.²⁶ The angry ‘glance from below’ may occasionally be a mere stock phrase to indicate anger, but the expression often immediately precedes violent actions against the offender(s) if the situation is not resolved, as a brief summary of some of its most salient occurrences in Homeric epic will demonstrate.²⁷ In most cases, those who cast the angry looks (and thus threaten to let violent deeds follow) are major heroes, such as Achilles, Odysseus, and Diomedes, whose propensity for violence is well known in the epic tradition.

- At the first occurrence of the formula in *Iliad* 1, Achilles starts his threat (*Il.* 1.148–71) with a menacing glance and, since Agamemnon does not relent in his response (*Il.* 1.172–87), Achilles prepares to follow up his words with physical aggression and is only held back by the intervention of Athena (*Il.* 1.188–221).
- Odysseus follows up his indignant threats to Thersites, which had been introduced with a scowl (*Il.* 2.245–64), in response to the latter’s impertinent speech to Agamemnon (*Il.* 2.225–42), by beating him across the back with the sceptre (*Il.* 2.265–8).
- In *Iliad* 4, Odysseus answers Agamemnon’s rebukes with a scowl (*Il.* 4.349–55), making Agamemnon realize his error and the anger he has provoked (see *Il.* 4.357: ὥς γνῶ χρομένοιο), so that he apologizes immediately and thereby defuses the situation (*Il.* 4.356–63). Later, in *Iliad* 14, Odysseus’ angry reply (*Il.* 14.82–102) again makes Agamemnon back down and reconsider his earlier orders (*Il.* 14.103–8). It is unlikely that Odysseus would actually take violent action against the commander of the Greek army, but the mere expression of belligerence proves to be sufficient and makes Agamemnon back-pedal in both cases.

²⁶ This is also hinted at in the very last paragraph by Holoka (n. 1), 16: ‘In all instances, the facial gesture ὑπόδρα ἰδῶν charges the speech it introduces with a decidedly minatory fervency and excitement: a threshold has been reached and such inflammable materials as wounded pride, righteous indignation, frustration, shame, and shock are nearing the combustion point.’ However, this aspect does not feature prominently in Holoka’s readings of individual passages and does not constitute the main focus of the formula in his analysis.

²⁷ On the occasionally inhibiting effect of the angry look, see Holoka (n. 1), 4: ‘...dark looks signal irritation and resentment and are meant to stop short an offender against social decorum.’ Holoka also offers a detailed analysis of the Iliadic occurrences but does not focus on the issue of a threat of violence, which appears to be inherent in the formula and is often also carried out.

- After his scowling address to Dolon (*Il.* 10.446–53), Diomedes denies the spy's supplication and proceeds to kill him (*Il.* 10.454–7). (Note that, in this case, even though Dolon behaves as a suppliant in *Il.* 10.454–5, which often entails clasping the knees of the addressee, there is no indication that he is physically lower than Odysseus and Diomedes: Diomedes' angry gaze is obviously not directed downward.)
- Zeus's angry speech to Hera even contains the overt threat of hanging her up with golden chains (*Il.* 15.13–33), but he does not carry it out since she accedes to his wishes (*Il.* 15.34–46).
- At their first encounter in *Iliad* 20, Achilles' glower introduces a death threat to Hector: ἄσσον' ἴθ', ὥς κεν θᾶσσον ὀλέθρου πείρατ' ἴκηαι ('come closer, so you will sooner be caught in the snares of death', *Il.* 20.428–9), but their encounter is deferred by the intervention of Apollo (*Il.* 20.443–4). Again, in *Iliad* 22, Achilles' first rejection of Hector's appeal for an honourable burial is prefaced by a scowl (*Il.* 22.260–72), before he mortally wounds him (*Il.* 22.311–30), as is his second rejection (*Il.* 22.344–54), after which he proceeds to desecrate Hector's corpse (*Il.* 22.395–405).
- In *Odyssey* 8, Odysseus' angry reply to Euryalus (*Od.* 8.165–85) is followed by the sublimated violence of displaying an impressive athletic feat that shames all other contenders (*Od.* 8.186–93).
- Antinous' and Eurymachus' ineffective throws of stools at Odysseus (*Od.* 17.462–5; 18.394–8) are each preceded by angry words (*Od.* 17.459–61; 18.387–93).
- Odysseus himself is set apart from the suitors in that he manages to effectively knock out the beggar Irus (*Od.* 18.95–9) after his scowling threat (*Od.* 18.14–24), and his angry speech at the servant girl Melantho (*Od.* 18.337–9) will also not remain without consequences but ultimately lead to her execution (*Od.* 22.465–73).
- Similarly, in the three instances where the formula occurs during the slaughter of the suitors in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 22.34, 60, 320), Odysseus' angry 'view from beneath lowered brows' is always immediately followed by violent and deadly actions against his opponents.
- In the *Homeric Hymn* to Dionysus, after having been captured by pirates in the form of a young man, the god transforms himself into a lion (*Hym. Hom.* 7.44–6) and, with a fierce glare (*Hym. Hom.* 7.48), attacks their captain and scares the rest of the crew into the sea (*Hym. Hom.* 7.50–2). In this case, the phrase has obviously been adapted from its usual application to human beings to an animal to indicate both anger and aggression, as has been argued above. However, in this context the phrase clearly cannot feature in a speech introduction as it usually does, and has lost its original reference to a facial gesture since the inclination of the head does not serve the same preparatory function for violent actions in quadrupeds.

As this brief examination of the contexts in which the phrase occurs has shown, the formula ὑπόδρα ἰδών appears to be closely associated with violent actions and its origin can plausibly be explained as a metonymical reference to a primal, evolutionary-biological instinctive action which prepares the angry person's body for an attack and the ensuing violent conflict.²⁸ Indeed, the threat of violence inherent in this expression might be the salient element in the application of this formula and the image of anger construed by it.²⁹ Not only does it signal anger at a perceived slight or a breach of conduct, but the facial expression it describes more specifically indicates the commitment and physical preparation of the angry person to resort to violence if the conflict is not immediately resolved by other means.³⁰ This analysis of the metonymic basis of the expression does not preclude the established interpretation of the phrase ὑπόδρα ἰδών as denoting the angry indignation of a socially superior toward an inferior's infraction,³¹ even though the superiority might only arise from the specific circumstances and the claim to righteous indignation.³² However, the

²⁸ Unfortunately, in the visual arts the gesture of inclining one's head is quite unspecific and might indicate other emotional responses, such as pain or grief: see L. Giuliani, *Bild und Mythos. Geschichte der Bilderzählung in der griechischen Kunst* (Munich, 2003), 236–41, on vase paintings depicting the wrath of Achilles. However, acts of violence and aggression can be seen as a clear pictorial expression of anger (see *ibid.*, p. 237: 'Zorn [wird] als Aggressivität dargestellt und mit einer entsprechenden Handlung verbunden.')

²⁹ On the focusing function of metonymies for construal, see R. W. Langacker, 'Construal', in E. Dąbrowka and D. Divjak (eds.), *Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Berlin and New York, 2015), 126: 'Metonymy reflects the general strategy of focusing entities that are salient or easily accessible, relying on the substrate for essential content left implicit. It thereby achieves both processing ease and coding efficiency.'

³⁰ See also the observation that there appears to be a gradual difference between the anger expressed by the verb σκύεσθαι, which might originally refer to frowning, and ὑπόδρα ἰδών, in D. L. Cairns, 'Ethics, Ethology, Terminology: Iliadic Anger and the Cross-Cultural Study of Emotion', in S. M. Braund and G. W. Most (eds.), *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (Cambridge, 2004), 44: 'So the frown need not be entirely aggressive; it may express anger to which one is trying not to give full rein.'

³¹ See the conclusion of Holoka (n. 1), 16: '...to look darkly is to employ a nonverbal cue fraught with judgmental significance. The speaker, whatever his message, transmits by his facial demeanor that an infraction of propriety has occurred; he deplores the willful traducing of rules of conduct governing relations between superordinates and inferiors. In most instances, these rules are asymmetrical but equally binding in both directions: on the one hand, an individual may look darkly to reassert his own superiority and his entitlement to deference in the comportment of the addressee.... On the other hand, superiors also owe definite obligations of civility and decorum to their inferiors, and failure to have regard for these may properly occasion angry remonstrances and even a contemporary inversion of status.'

³² See the reassessment in Cairns (n. 30), 44: 'ὑπόδρα ἰδών thus does indeed, as Holoka observes, focus on questions of status; but Holoka is wrong to suggest that it presupposes a hierarchical relationship between angry superior and offending inferior. It would be better to say that the phrase requires the assumption of an aggressive, self-assertive role in interaction,

facial expression's inherent association with aggression augments our understanding of the traditional referentiality and contextual significance of the formula, which is in tune with the common view of Homeric society, since impetuosity and anger, as well as the threat or use of violence at perceived or actual slights, are often deemed the prerogative of those who are not only physically but also socially superior in the epic 'society of heroes'.³³

In conclusion, the facial expression of 'looking from below' is obviously transhistorically accessible, meaning that we can still instinctively understand the significance of a glance from beneath lowered brows as signalling anger, belligerence, and a threat of imminent aggression, and it is probably universal since it appears to have originated from an evolutionary-biological instinctive action based on the specific physique of human beings.³⁴ However, the phrasing itself is historically contextualized and culturally specific to Greek epic diction. In English, for example, there is no comparable idiomatic metonymy referencing a glance from beneath lowered brows as a sign of anger and aggression.³⁵ The lack of a corresponding idiom has led to a series of contextually correct, but ultimately incomplete, translations of the formula ὑπόδρα ἰδών as 'looking darkly or grimly',³⁶ 'glaring sternly

and that the enforced intimacy, the invasion of the interlocutor's space that it entails, presupposes a claim to superiority only in the sense that it takes upon itself the right to rebuke, to criticize, or to protest.'

³³ For the connection of anger and violence with social status as marks of heroism in Homer, see esp. H. van Wees, *Status Warriors. War, Violence and Society in Homer and History* (Amsterdam, 1992), esp. 61–165 (chap. 3: 'The Importance of Being Angry: Status, Personal Power and Violence').

³⁴ On the question of the universality of facial expressions of emotions, see the works of Paul Ekman and his collaborators, e.g. P. Ekman and W. V. Friesen, 'Constants Across Cultures in the Face and Emotion', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 17 (1971), 124–9; or P. Ekman, 'Universals and Cultural Differences in Facial Expressions of Emotions', in J. Cole (ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* (Lincoln, NE, 1972), 207–82. See also the criticism of R. Boddice, *The History of Emotions* (Manchester, 2018), esp. 113–20. On the tensions between universals and cultural constructions in researching emotions and emotion language, see e.g. Z. Kövecses, G. B. Palmer, and R. Dirven, 'Language and Emotion: The Interplay of Conceptualisation with Physiology and Culture', in R. Dirven and R. Pörings (eds.), *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast* (Berlin and New York, 2003), 133–59, who briefly discuss emotion metonymies in general but not facial expressions, e.g. at 135: 'Emotion concepts must frequently blend universal experiences of physiological functions with culturally specific models and interpretations.'

³⁵ For an introduction to the problems of researching the history of emotions and their expressions, see also Boddice (n. 34), esp. 106–31.

³⁶ Holoka (n. 1) uses 'darkly' to capture the meaning of ὑπόδρα (and is followed in the recent translations of the epics by Verity [n. 4]), thereby drawing on metaphorical LIGHT/DARK imagery, which is also in evidence in early Greek, albeit not the expression in question. F. Montanari,

or darkly’, ‘eying darkly or angrily’, or most literally ‘glowering from beneath his brows’,³⁷ since they all convey the notion of anger, but none can express the aggression and the overt threat of physical violence inherent in the Greek original.

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The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek (Leiden, 2015), 2218, s.v. ὑπόδρα, gives the meaning as ‘grimly’ (as does *LSJ*, which also offers the literal translation ‘looking from under the brows’ [which does not clearly convey the notion of anger] and the less appropriate ‘looking askance’). Kirk (n. 2), 68, ad *Il.* 1.148–71, offers ‘from under lowered brow’, but no explanation as to what this is supposed to mean, presumably taking it to be self-explanatory.

³⁷ These examples present a mere selection from the most recent translations of the *Iliad* – Verity (n. 4); E. McCrorie (trans.), *Homer. The Iliad* (Baltimore, MD, 2012), B. B. Powell (trans.), *Homer. The Iliad* (Oxford and New York, 2014); and P. Green (trans.), *Homer. The Iliad* (Oakland, CA, 2015) – who do not translate the phrase consistently but vary their expressions.