

The line ὄσφιν ἔϋφρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν introduces nine speeches in the *Iliad* and eight of these are preceded by narrative passages establishing the ‘quality’ and authority of the character about to speak. Thus marked by descriptive passages that emphasize the importance of what follows, these speeches constitute critical moments of public deliberation. For example, the phrase prefaces Kalchas’ speech on Apollo’s plague (1.73), Nestor’s attempt at reconciling Agamemnon and Achilles (1.253), and Poulydamas’ ignored strategic advice to Hektor (18.253). While the line itself denotes a specific, contextualized speech act with its two verbs (ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν), the participial phrase (ὄσφιν ἔϋφρονέων) reveals the *intention* of the speaker. The nine persuasive speeches introduced in this way occur in moments of public advice and the *failure* of persuasion in several cases is integral to the advancement of the epic’s plot. Furthermore, this shared introductory line, by connecting critical debates, allows for an ‘intertextual’ analysis of the problems of speech in a heroic context.

Introductions are thus essential tools for the interpretation of Homeric speeches. Prior scholarship on introductory lines has focused on their interchangeability and function as tools of oral composition (Edwards, 1970; Riggsby, 1992). Recent work has shown that they also function in characterization and the development of epic themes (Beck, 1998). Some speech introductions, when paired with speech ‘capping’ lines and the narrated reaction of the speech’s audience, may additionally help elucidate an internal Homeric view on the application of effective persuasive speech. Although speeches introduced by ὄσφιν ἔϋφρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν contrast with many prefacing lines in that they do not present an epithet, the narrative, nevertheless, marks them with strong emphasis. In *Poetry in Speech*, E. J. Bakker provides a new evaluation of the application and meaning of noun-epithet phrases, and suggests that a full noun-epithet combination in a line of speech introduction marks the speech that follows as integral to the “primary action” of the plot (1997, 167). This paper will supplement Bakker’s analysis to show the marking of similar significance with expanded characterization and a repeated line the meaning of which is refined by its use in similar contexts through the epic. In this effort, I will present and analyze the application ὄσφιν ἔϋφρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν to show how it guides the reader’s understanding of the character’s ‘text’, partially illuminates the complex relationship between Homeric speech and action, and provides another step towards an appreciation of the ‘rhetoric’ of speech in the Homeric world.

Works Cited

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