

At the beginning of *Iliad* 9, a despondent Agamemnon proposes that the Achaians give up and go home; after a prolonged silence, Diomedes upbraids him to the acclamation of the assembled Achaians, a communal reaction signaling support for his censure. Nestor intervenes with a speech that appears inapposite at first sight—he compliments *and* criticizes Diomedes and then turns to gnomic comments on civil strife and kingship before suggesting the dissolution of the assembly. When Nestor responds to Diomedes he does not reject what he says directly, but objects obliquely that he has not reached the *télos múthôn* (9.56). From Nestor's response it is clear that Diomedes has challenged Agamemnon's authority, a position embattled since the beginning of the epic. Nestor's speech, which I suggest appropriates the content of Diomedes' criticism in order to mitigate the effects of his dissent through commentary on his *use* of language, offers unique reflections on the exigencies of political speech in Homer.

Although the phrase *télos múthôn* has attracted little attention in Homeric scholarship, I argue in this paper that understanding its Homeric meaning is essential to appreciating the import of Nestor's reaction to Diomedes. Building on Richard Martin's refinement of *múthos* as an authoritative speech act denoting either a command/proposal or a boast/threat (1989, 15-25), I trace the phrase's meaning in the Homeric epics as denoting, generally, a "completion of plans/threats". Then, I propose that the phrase garners context-specific meaning in conjunction both with what Nestor says about the use of speech in book 9 and the way Nestor himself uses language in responding to Diomedes. I conclude, similarly to Cedric Whitman (1958, 167), that Nestor implies that Diomedes has not said enough, but I expand his interpretation by suggesting that Nestor shows Diomedes what he has not done—how to give a "fullness to *muthoi*"—by ending the speech with a specific and executable plan of action. Nestor's criticism is thus rhetorically minded with a potential pedagogical function—Diomedes' speeches at the end of book 9 and the beginning of book 14 display a different rhetorical structure and a pragmatic purpose similar to Nestor's. I close the paper by contextualizing the importance of the *télos múthôn* within a larger project to adumbrate the Homeric notion of the effective use of speech as embodied in and presented through the problematic figure of Nestor.