

AT LAST SPOKE DIOMEDES: DECORUM IN THE ILIADIC ASSEMBLY*

ABSTRACT

This article examines Diomedes' speeches in the Iliad and provides a new reading of the Homeric formula ὀψὲ δὲ δὴ μετέειπε. Scholars have used this formula to support the claim that Diomedes is an inexperienced speaker. However, a closer reading of this formula reveals that Diomedes makes delayed responses in observance of the etiquette of Homeric deliberative speech which dictates that younger and lower-ranking chieftains wait their turn to speak. The article argues that the speech type must also match the speaker's status. Junior statesmen can only respond to proposals, while elder statesmen can call assemblies, set the agenda and give unilateral commands to the host.

Keywords: Homer; *Iliad*; ancient Greek poetry; ancient Greek literature; Diomedes; Nestor; Agamemnon; Achilles; assembly; council; politics

INTRODUCTION

Book 9 of the *Iliad* opens with the Greek camp in crisis: the Trojans are positioned outside the Achaean wall and await the break of dawn to set fire to the ships. For the second time in the poem, Agamemnon proposes that the Greeks abandon the expedition. Agamemnon's speech is met with silence. At last, Diomedes speaks and chastises the leader of the Achaeans for his cowardice, proposing that Agamemnon leave with his ships while the others remain to fight. Diomedes' speech receives the shouting applause of all the Achaeans. Nestor then rises to speak, however, and appears to give the young hero a lesson in public discourse, presenting himself as the elder statesman and pointing out that Diomedes, despite being the best speaker among his peers, has not reached the τέλος μύθων (9.56).¹ Nestor finishes his speech by commanding the Achaeans to ready their meals and place a sentry at the ditch and asking Agamemnon to host a dinner for the elder statesmen, where he will propose the embassy to Achilles.

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¹ The fullest treatment of Diomedes in the *Iliad* remains Ø. Andersen, *Die Diomedesgestalt in der Ilias* (Oslo, 1978). On the relationship between Diomedes and Nestor, see C.A. Querbach, 'Conflicts between young and old in Homer's *Iliad*', in S. Bertman (ed.), *The Conflict of Generations in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Amsterdam, 1976), 55–64. The role of the council and assembly are examined by M. Schofield, 'Euboulia in the *Iliad*', *CQ* 36 (1986), 6–31, at 23–6. H. Roisman, 'Nestor the good counsellor', *CQ* 55 (2005), 17–38 offers a comparison of Nestor and Diomedes. For Diomedes as young speaker, see R.P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1989), 23–6, 120–6; J.P. Christensen, 'The end of speeches and a speech's end: Nestor, Diomedes and the *telos muthōn*', in K. Myrsiades (ed.), *Reading Homer: Film and Text* (Madison, NJ, 2009), 136–62; and J. O'Maley, 'Diomedes as audience and speaker in the *Iliad*', in J.L. Ready and C.C. Tsagalis (edd.), *Homer in Performance* (Austin, 2018), 278–98. D.F. Elmer, *The Poetics of Consent* (Baltimore, 2013) examines the role of consent and dissent in the *Iliad*.

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While Nestor's speech expresses general approval of Diomedes' rebuke of Agamemnon, many scholars believe that the interaction exposes Diomedes' incompetence as a public speaker.² More charitable interpretations portray Diomedes as an exemplary student of *muthoi*, or authoritative speeches, who improves by leaps and bounds in his rhetorical ability over the course of the poem.³ However, these interpretations are still contingent on the characterization of Diomedes as an inexperienced speaker who is often at a loss for words, speaks out of turn and has poor command of speech genres.⁴ This article interrogates the discrepancy between the positive reception of Diomedes' speeches by the Achaeans and their negative reception by scholars,⁵ who tend to emphasize Diomedes' youth and his relationship with his absent father. Diomedes' speeches always seem to hit their mark and demonstrate the hero's grasp of the situation at hand and the larger narrative of the *Iliad*. It is Diomedes, for example, who remarks that the embassy to Achilles was doomed from the start and that the estranged hero will return on his own terms.⁶

This article examines the contexts of Diomedes' speeches in the *Iliad* and provides a new reading of the Homeric formula ὁψὲ δὲ δὴ μετέειπε, which is often used to argue that Diomedes' speeches are late interjections. A reading of this formula in the wider context of the *Iliad* reveals that Diomedes' delayed responses follow the procedures of the Iliadic assembly, which dictate that younger and lower-ranking chieftains allow the higher ranking γέροντες,⁷ like Nestor and Agamemnon, to speak before them. Their answers, too, must match their status. Junior statesmen can only respond to proposals, while elder statesmen have the right to set the agenda and give unilateral commands to

² B. Hainsworth, *The Iliad: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 1993) on 9.52–78 comments: 'Diomedes had begun impetuously and ended with hyperbole (cf. his reaction at 697–709 to the embassy's failure), but then these were the vices of youth and Diomedes was the youngest of the Achaean leaders (14.112) and younger than any of Nestor's sons (57–58).'

³ E.g. Martin (n. 1), 123–6; Christensen (n. 1), 151–2; O'Maley (n. 1), 294–5.

⁴ Martin (n. 1), 125: 'Demonstrably inexperienced, needing tutorials by Nestor to make proper self-representation in the assembly (9.31–49), he is represented even on the level of discourse genres as one who has not yet mastered the repertoire of commanding, flyting, and feats of memory . . . His assembly speeches are introduced as 'late' interjections (7.399, 9.31, 9.696), a trait never noted with older heroes. And he seems to bungle his first such speech by using the tactics of *neikos* speeches when he really just wants to dissent from what Agamemnon is saying.' G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 1990) on 7.398–9 provides a different evaluation: 'Diomedes as always is the hero least overawed by circumstances, reacting with a typical incisiveness to criticism, bad news or an important suggestion as here.' Querbach (n. 1), 63 notes that 'Diomedes has also demonstrated that a young man sometimes gives sounder counsel than does an old man, a view which the old could not accept.'

⁵ O'Maley (n. 1) argues for a more agonistic relationship in which Diomedes matches his father in deeds and surpasses him in the effectiveness of his speech. J.P. Christensen and E.T.E. Barker, 'On not remembering Tydeus: Agamemnon, Diomedes and the contest for Thebes', *MD* 66 (2011), 9–43, at 34 claim that Diomedes' actions in the *Iliad* 'contribute to an act of double erasure performed on Tydeus and his story at Thebes' (emphasis theirs). See also L. Pratt, 'Diomedes, the fatherless hero of the *Iliad*', in S.R. Hübner and D.M. Ratzan (edd.), *Growing Up Fatherless in Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2009), 141–61.

⁶ Querbach (n. 1), 62.

⁷ I use the term γέροντες to designate the primary decision-makers in the Iliadic assembly. The term γέρον has two meanings in the *Iliad*. In the singular it is used to designate a man of the age of Priam, Nestor, Phoenix and Peleus. In the plural it refers to the βουλή γερόντων 'council of the elders' (2.53); cf. γερούσια, πρέσβυς and πρεσβεία. Not all these elders are silver-haired, as the status of γέρον is conferred on the basis of social prestige, military prowess and skill in counsel. The chief γέροντες of the Greek camp are Agamemnon, Menelaus, Nestor, Idomeneus, the two Aiantes, Diomedes and Odysseus (cf. 2.402–8). Prior to his withdrawal, Achilles must also have been part of the γέροντες since he surpasses many of the elders listed above in prestige and ability (1.258), has the authority to call assemblies (1.54, 19.40–4) and alludes to being sought after for his counsel (9.374, 24.650–3).

the Achaean host. I argue that by the end of Book 9 Diomedes has become a full-fledged γέρων and no longer must wait his turn to speak.

SPEECH IN THE ILIADIC ASSEMBLY

Before examining the speeches of Diomedes, it is worthwhile to establish a baseline for the procedures of deliberative speech in the poem. In the *Iliad*, counsel and debate take place in the council of elders (βουλή), the Greek and Trojan assembly (ἀγορή) and in *ad hoc* assemblies on the battlefield.⁸ Speech in the council largely mirrors the procedures of the assembly, but the deliberative body is restricted to the γέροντες, the primary decision-makers of the Greek camp. Councils are carried out beside Nestor's ship (2.53–4), in Agamemnon's huts (7.313, 9.89–90), outside the trench (10.198–9) and in indeterminate locations of the camp (14.27–9).⁹

The assembly that opens Book 19 of the *Iliad* provides an exemplary model for collective deliberation. Here, Achilles calls an assembly to renounce his wrath at the behest of his mother. The Achaeans gather and sit down (καθ ... ἵζοντο, 19.50),¹⁰ likely before Odysseus' ships, the social centre of the Achaean camp.¹¹ Achilles then rises to speak (τοῖσι δ' ἀνιστάμενος μετέφη, 19.55)¹² and addresses Agamemnon. He renounces his anger and orders Agamemnon to rally the troops (ὄτρυνον πόλεμόνδε κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαιοῦς, 19.69). The assembled members respond to the speech (ἐχάρησαν ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί, 19.74).¹³ If the proposal requires modification, as is the case here, another speaker rises and addresses the assembly (τοῖσι δὲ καὶ μετέειπε, 19.76).¹⁴ Agamemnon proposes that Achilles wait while the gifts he promised are brought from his ship (19.140–4). Achilles replies (τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη, 19.145) that there is no time for delay or ceremony and that they should return to battle straightaway (νῦν δὲ μνησώμεθα χάρμης | αἶψα μάλ', 19.148–9). It is at this moment that a third speaker, Odysseus, intervenes (τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη, 19.154). He points out that it is not wise to send the troops to battle before they have eaten and asks Achilles to order them to ready their meals. In the meantime, Achilles is to allow Agamemnon to bring the promised gifts and swear an oath that he never slept with Briseis. Agamemnon addresses

⁸ The most important battlefield assemblies are held by the Trojans in their pitched camp on the plain (8.489–542, 18.243–311). Two other assemblies are held between Trojans and Achaeans at Hector's prompting to negotiate a duel between Paris and Menelaus (3.76–94) and between himself and an Achaean champion (7.54–91).

⁹ The proposals of the first two councils are later discussed in the assembly. The council that culminates in the embassy to Achilles is a development of Nestor's assembly speech (9.69–78). The last two councils occur in situations where an assembly cannot be gathered, since the host is asleep in Book 10 and fighting in Book 14.

¹⁰ Rising to speak and sitting to signal the end of a speech is common practice for Achaeans and Trojans (1.68, 1.101, 2.76, 7.354, 7.365). The expectation that listeners sit is highlighted by the Trojans standing in their assembly in fear of Achilles: ὀρθῶν δ' ἐσταῶτων ἀγορῇ γένετ', οὐδέ τις ἔτλη | ἐξεσθαι· πάντας γάρ ἔχε τρόμος, οὐνεκ' Ἀχιλλεύς | ἐξεφάνη ... (18.246–8).

¹¹ This detail is given in 11.806–8: ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ κατὰ νῆας Ὀδυσσεύς θείοιο | ἵξε θεῶν Πάτροκλος, ἴνα σφ' ἀγορῇ τε θέμις τε | ἦν, τῇ δὲ καὶ σφί θεῶν ἐτετεύχτο βωμοί ...

¹² The more common verb is μετέειπε. The verb μετέφη is used only five times in the *Iliad*, where it introduces the speeches of Achilles (1.58, 19.55), Agamemnon (2.411, 4.153) and Zeus (19.100). Achilles and Agamemnon are the only Achaeans to convoke assemblies in the poem, reflecting their status in the Achaean camp.

¹³ For the different types of responses to deliberative speeches in the *Iliad* and the degree of consent encoded in them, see Elmer (n. 1), 21–47.

¹⁴ Agamemnon does not stand in the middle of the assembly because of his wound (19.77).

Odysseus (τὸν δ' αὖτε προσέειπεν, 19.184), expresses his desire to make an oath, orders Odysseus to select youths to fetch the gifts promised the day before and makes an indirect command for Talthebius to ready a boar for sacrifice to Zeus and Helios (καπρὸν ἐτοίμασάτω, 19.197). Achilles replies to Agamemnon (τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη, 19.198) and stands his ground: they should postpone the ceremony, fight on an empty stomach (νήστιας ἀκμήνους, 19.207) and prepare a great meal after Patroclus has been avenged.

Odysseus intervenes once again (τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη, 19.215), this time citing his intellectual superiority on account of his age (19.216–19). He addresses Achilles' main concern, the need to mourn his fallen companion, by arguing that it is not possible to grieve by fasting in war when so many die in combat every day.¹⁵ Agamemnon's proposal stands. After Odysseus' speech, youths are sent to Agamemnon's hut to retrieve the gifts and the women promised, Briseis among them. The gifts are placed in the middle of the assembly (τὰ μὲν ἐν μέσση ἀγορῇ θέσαν, 19.249). Agamemnon now stands (ἄν δ' Ἀγαμέμνων ἴστατο, 19.249–50) and makes his oath while everyone sits in silence (19.255–6). The oath made and the boar sacrificed, Achilles rises to speak (ἀνστὰς . . . μετῴδα, 19.269). He shifts the blame for the conflict to Zeus and sends the Achaeans to eat in preparation for war (νῦν δ' ἔρχεσθ' ἐπὶ δεῖπνον, ἵνα ξυνάγωμεν Ἄρηα, 19.275). Achilles' authoritative command effectively ends the assembly (ὥς ἄρ' ἐφώνησεν, λῦσεν δ' ἀγορὴν αἰψηρήν, 19.276).

The assembly in Book 19 is what an Iliadic assembly should be.¹⁶ It follows all the procedures of public discourse from the calling of the assembly to its disbandment. The speaker that calls for the assembly stands and makes a proposal, which is evaluated by the collective body and the chief decision-makers. If the proposal is problematic, one of the γέροντες, in this case Odysseus, makes a reply. Generally, the formula used is τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη, which surfaces multiple times in this passage. Counterproposals can be made, and, once a consensus has been reached, an order is given in the form of a command or a hortatory subjunctive. Finally, the assembly is disbanded, and the proposal is put into action. It is of note that only elder statesmen, Agamemnon, Achilles, Nestor and Odysseus, participate in the actual modification or rebuttal of the proposal. Moreover, no resolution is passed without the final approval of the governing authority. In the Achaean camp this authority is most often Agamemnon. In Book 19, it is Achilles.

¹⁵ γαστέρι δ' οὐ πῶς ἔστι νέκυν πενθήσσαι Ἀχαιοῖς | λῆν γὰρ πολλοὶ καὶ ἐπήτριοι ἤματα πάντα | πίπτουσιν· πότε κέν τις ἀναπνεύσειε πόνοιο; (19.225–7).

¹⁶ For a close reading, see E.T.E. Barker, 'Achilles' last stand: institutionalising dissent in Homer's *Iliad*, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 50 (2004), 92–120, especially 111–15. At 101, Barker argues: 'To all intents and purposes, before Achilles calls an assembly, the Achaeans simply did not possess the capacity to discuss public concerns in the open. Now an assembly has been established, the audience are to learn what that means as they experience the event of assembly in the narrative.' I agree with the anonymous reviewer's objection, cited at 101 n. 48, that 'the procedures and experience of the assembly pre-exist the *Iliad*'. Contrary to Barker's response in the footnote, it is not the case that 'formula is kept to the bare minimum' in the opening assembly. Many of the formulas that describe the procedures of the assembly are employed, including the rising and speaking formula (τοῖσι δ' ἀνιστάμενος μετέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς, 1.58 = 19.55), the formula that describes one speaker sitting and another rising (ἦτοι ὃ γ' ὥς εἰπὼν κατ' ἄρ' ἔζετο· τοῖσι δ' ἀνέστη, 1.69 and 1.101 = 2.76, 7.354, 7.365) and two ubiquitous formulas used for responding to a proposal: τὸν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη (1.84, 1.130 and 1.285) and τὸν δ' ἡμείβετ' ἔπειτα (1.121, 1.172, 1.292). In short, the procedures of the assembly and the strategies for dissent are deeply embedded in Homeric diction and would have been known to the audience.

THE FORMULA ὧς ΔΕ ΔΗ ΜΕΤΕΕΙΠΕ

The formula ὧς δὲ δὴ μετέειπε refers to a speech act uttered after a long pause in deliberation. It is attested five times in the *Iliad* and once in a modified form with the verb μετέειπε at verse end. It is intimately linked with the figure of Diomedes, whose speeches it introduces three times (7.399, 9.31, 9.696). The formula also introduces speeches by Athena (8.30), Phoenix (9.432) and Menelaus (7.94). ὧς δὲ δὴ μετέειπε is always preceded by another formula—ὧς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἄκην ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ, 'Thus he spoke, and then everyone became hushed with silence'.¹⁷ The reason for the silence is often explained by another formulaic phrase, such as the enjambed 'astonished at his *muthos*, for he had spoken rather sternly' (8.29, 9.432, 9.694) or 'and for a long time the sons of the Achaeans were silent in grief' (9.30, 9.695). The latter formula signals total despair at the *muthos* uttered,¹⁸ such as after Agamemnon's second proposal to flee Troy and the report of the failed embassy to Achilles. The phrase ὧς δὲ δὴ μετέειπε thus serves to highlight dramatic anticipation after a long pause, an unusual situation in the assembly.¹⁹

The operative word in the formula is the adverb ὧς, rendered by Butler as 'till at last', by Murray as 'at length' and by Lattimore as 'at long last'. Note that the sense 'late' or 'too late', which Martin and other critics seem to give to the word,²⁰ is missing in these translations. In Homer ὧς is the antonym of αὐτίκα ('immediately,' 'at once'),²¹ as made explicit by the antithesis of the two words in Agamemnon's speech to Menelaus after Pandarus breaks the truce (4.160–2):

εἴ περ γάρ τε καὶ αὐτίκ' Ὀλύμπιος οὐκ ἐτέλεσσαν,
ἐκ τε καὶ ὧς τελεῖ, σὺν τε μεγάλῳ ἀπέτεισαν
σὺν σφῆσιν κεφαλῇσι γυναιξὶ τε καὶ τεκέεσσιν.

For even if the Olympian has not fulfilled [the oath] at once,
he eventually brings it to pass, and they atone for it with a great price,
with their heads, and their wives, and their children.

Agamemnon is not saying that Zeus fulfils his oaths 'late' or 'too late', but rather that, though punishments may not happen immediately, accounts will ultimately be rendered. The base meaning of ὧς is 'later', 'eventually' or 'not at the present'. The meaning is relative rather than absolute, as borne out by its Homeric derivatives, especially the adjective ὧμιος and the compounds ὧσιτέλεστος (2.325) and ὧσίγονος (3.353, 7.87, 16.31), the latter of which means 'born after' not 'late born'.²² The absolute meaning 'late' and 'too late' is a post-Homeric development.

DIOMEDES' SPEECHES IN THE *ILIAD*

Diomedes has moments of verbal prominence outside of the assembly and the council, notably, his famous exchange with Glaucus in Book 6, but he does not participate in

¹⁷ Cf. J.M. Foley, 'Sixteen moments of silence in Homer', *QUCC* 50 (1995), 7–26.

¹⁸ R.F. Person, 'The "became silent to silence" formula', *GRBS* 36 (1995), 327–39.

¹⁹ D. Beck, *Homeric Conversation* (Washington, DC, 2005), 36–7. Cf. Hainsworth (n. 2), on 31.

²⁰ A. Kelly, *A Referential Commentary and Lexicon to Homer; Iliad VIII* (Oxford, 2007), 87 n. 3 interprets ὧς as 'late' and argues that it shows reluctance on the part of the speaker.

²¹ LSJ, s.vv.

²² Cf. Hdt. 7.3.3.

collective decision-making until after his *aristeia*. His first *muthos* in the assembly takes place in response to the Trojan messenger Idaeus, sent by Paris and Priam to offer material recompense for Helen and negotiate a daylong truce to allow for the burial of the dead (7.385–97). The problem with Idaeus' proposal is not the truce, which had already been proposed by Nestor and approved by the Achaeans (7.324–44), but rather the offer of payment for Helen, with which even the Trojans take issue (7.393). Surprisingly, there is no immediate response from Menelaus, Agamemnon or Nestor, perhaps suggesting that accepting payment for Helen is not off the table.²³ After a long silence Diomedes speaks (ὄψε δὲ δὴ μετέειπε), answering only the first proposal: 'Let no one accept the possessions of Alexander now nor Helen. But it is known even to him with the least foresight, that the bounds of destruction have already been fastened for the Trojans' (7.400–3). The result is the shouting assent of all the Achaeans (οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπ' ἄλχον υἷες Ἀχαιῶν, 7.403). It appears that Diomedes can read the crowd better than the other chieftains.

Diomedes' second speech in the assembly (9.31–49), discussed in the introduction, comes after Agamemnon proposes that the Achaeans abandon camp and return home with their ships. His speech is met with silence and grief (δὴν δ' ἄνεω ἦσαν τετιηότες υἷες Ἀχαιῶν, 9.30). Diomedes eventually speaks and chastises Agamemnon for his weakness and hypocrisy (9.32–5), alluding to Agamemnon's criticism of Diomedes in the *epipolēsis* where he claims that Tydeus fathered a son better than him at counsel, but lesser in war (4.399–400),²⁴ a statement rendered patently false by Diomedes' *aristeia*. His speech is met with the shouting applause of the Achaeans.²⁵

There are some formal patterns in these two speeches that typify Diomedes as a speaker. First, both of Diomedes' speeches are prefaced by the formula ὥς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἀκὴν ἐγένοντο σιωπῇ, an expression that denotes partial or whole rejection of the proposal given and is the functional opposite of the formula 'they heard and obeyed'.²⁶ There is, of course, a difference between a speech made in the assembly by an Achaean chieftain and a proposal made by a Trojan herald. Idaeus' proposal cannot be simply heard and obeyed since it is not issued by a Greek leader. Here the silence formula hints at a possible division in the Achaean camp and a clear breakdown of the speaking chain of command among the γέροντες. It is unclear who should respond. Should it be Helen's husband or the supreme leader of the Achaean host? Diomedes awaits a response and answers Idaeus' proposal once it becomes clear that neither Menelaus nor Agamemnon is willing to speak. The bT scholia, apparently neglected by close readers of this passage, corroborates this interpretation. The scholia note on 7.399 that Diomedes awaited the decision of the Atreids and eventually rises to voice his opinion, leaning on his increased social status after his *aristeia* (ἀνέμενε γὰρ τὴν τῶν Ἀτρείδων γνώμην· ὥς πεπιθὼς δὲ τῇ ἀριστείᾳ ἀνέστη).²⁷ Second, both of Diomedes' speeches are met with the

²³ Christensen (n. 1), 138 attributes the Achaeans' silence to 'incredulous speechlessness' and remarks at 154, n. 8 that 'Diomedes may have a particular inability to abide silence: he breaks it at 7.400, 9.32, 9.698 and 10.221.' There are two issues with this claim. First, it is likely that the Achaean troops desire to cease from warfare. Both Greeks and Trojans rejoice (ἐχάρησαν) at the prospect of ending the war (ἐλπόμενοι παύσασθαι διζυροῦ πολέμοιο) when Menelaus accepts Paris' challenge (3.11–12). Second, the dynamics of these scenes demand an eventual response.

²⁴ The greatest heroes stand out in both spheres: Schofield (n. 1), at 9.

²⁵ One of the few critics who finds this speech effective is Christensen (n. 1), 140, but he finds it politically problematic, arguing: 'That Diomedes' speech and its reception are somehow threatening is underscored by Nestor's immediate response.'

²⁶ Elmer (n. 1), 28–9. See also Kelly (n. 20), 19, 85–6.

²⁷ H. Erbse, *Scholia graeca in Homeri Iliadem (scholia vetera)*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1971), on 7.399.

approval of the Achaeans, as expressed by the formula ‘Thus he spoke, and all the sons of the Achaeans shouted in applause’ (7.403, 9.50). In Book 7, the sentiment of Diomedes’ response to Idaeus is turned into policy by Agamemnon (‘Ἰδοῖ’, ἤτοι μῦθον Ἀχαιῶν αὐτὸς ἀκούεις | ὥς τοι ὑποκρίνονται· ἐμοὶ δ’ ἐπιανδάνει οὕτως, 7.406–7).

The proposals to receive payment for Helen or to abandon camp appear at crucial junctures in the poem that could seriously alter the course of the narrative,²⁸ and they require decisive action. It is here that Diomedes speaks. There are only a few passages of this structure in the *Iliad* that do not pertain to Diomedes. The first comes after Hector proposes a duel between Menelaus and Paris for Helen and her possessions. Menelaus’ speech is preceded by a silence that heightens the drama (3.95). However, Menelaus does not—in fact, cannot—delay his response. His honour and position in the Greek camp depend on an immediate reply (τοῖσι δὲ καὶ μετέειπε, 3.96).

Other situations are less compromising and do not demand an automatic response, such as Hector’s challenge of an Achaean champion in Book 7, which is met with dead silence: ‘Thus he spoke, and everyone grew hushed in silence. For they were ashamed to refuse, but they were afraid to accept’ (7.92–3). Menelaus eventually stands to speak (ὁψὲ δὲ δὴ Μενέλαος ἀνίστατο καὶ μετέειπεν, 7.94), chastising his comrades and volunteering to fight Hector himself. While his social standing is not directly on the line in Hector’s challenge, Menelaus feels that he must fight if no one else is willing since it is on his account that the Greeks are at Troy. His response, however, is precipitated. Everyone knows that he is no match for Hector, as the poet makes clear: ‘Then, Menelaus, would the end of life have appeared for you at the hands of Hector since he was far stronger’ (7.104–5). Agamemnon seizes his brother and forces him to back down on the grounds that he is being foolish (ἄφρᾶνεις, 7.109). Menelaus should not have spoken. In fact, every response to the silence formula is characterized by inefficacy: Phoenix’s attempt to convince Achilles to renounce his anger (9.430–3), Dolon’s offering to spy on the Greek camp (10.313–19) and Euryalus’ decision to box Epeius in the funeral games (23.676).

The only cases in which the silence formula is followed by an effective response are the speeches of Diomedes and Athena. This is not a coincidence, as both Diomedes and his patron goddess are the embodiment of wisdom, valour and youth. Athena’s speech comes after Zeus threatens to punish any god that intervenes in his plan to help the Trojans. The gods fall silent, astonished at his *muthos*. At last, Athena speaks, accepting his injunction with the qualification that they still be able to give counsel to the Achaeans so that fewer of them will perish (8.28–30). Athena is not the only partisan of the Greek cause, and one might expect that Poseidon or Hera, Zeus’s siblings and social peers, would be the ones to intervene.²⁹ As is to be expected, Athena succeeds in her plea (8.38–40; cf. 22.183–5).³⁰

Let us return to Martin’s claim that ‘[Diomedes’] assembly speeches are introduced as “late” interjections (7.399, 9.31, 9.696), a trait never noted with older heroes’.³¹ First, the formula ὁψὲ δὲ δὴ μετέειπε does in fact introduce the speech of two elder statesmen in the *Iliad*: Phoenix in the Embassy to Achilles (9.430–3) and Menelaus in response to

²⁸ Narratively, the drama and trepidation created by the silence formula may be analogous to that created by counterfactual statements introduced by ἐνθά κε(v): 2.155, 4.539, 6.73, 7.104, 8.130, 11.310, 13.723, 14.102, 16.698, 17.70, 17.319, 20.288, 21.544.

²⁹ E.g. 1.539, in which Hera addresses Zeus immediately upon his return from meeting with Thetis (αὐτῆκα κερτομίοισι Δία Κρονίωνα προσῆυδα).

³⁰ Aristarchus athetized verses 28–40. For a discussion see Kirk (n. 4), on 8.28–40.

³¹ Martin (n. 1), 125.

Hector's challenge (7.92–4).³² Second, neither elder statesman is successful in his aim. Phoenix fails to convince Achilles to join the fray, and Menelaus is rebuked and passed over in favour of a mightier warrior. Unlike their elders, Diomedes and Athena always hit the mark with their speeches. Zeus allows Athena to counsel the Greeks, and Diomedes garners applause for his speeches. Their responses, then, far from being belated interjections, are delivered with impeccable timing.

NESTOR AND THE ΤΕΛΟΣ ΜΥΘΩΝ

If Diomedes' speeches in the assembly receive acclaim by the deliberative body, why does Nestor tell Diomedes that he has not reached the τέλος μύθων in his first speech in Book 9? A recent trend is to attribute this fault to his misuse of the genre of reproach to express his dissent in the assembly.³³ Christensen, for example, claims that by reprimanding Agamemnon, 'Diomedes' speech creates a unity defined against Agamemnon, at its most stark, a unity that involves only him and Sthenelos: in short, a bitter splitting of the already embattled Achaian polity.' It is important to imagine, however, what the alternative might be. In Book 9, Agamemnon proposes abandoning the expedition once again, and, this time, the odds are stacked against the Achaeans. Hector and the Trojans have pitched camp outside the Achaean wall and await the opportunity to make good on their promise to set fire to the ships. It is inconceivable that the assembly could be properly dissolved before an answer to Agamemnon's proposal has been made. To prevent a recurrence of the debacle of the trial of the troops in Book 2, the Achaeans must be able to rally around a leader. Agamemnon has shown himself incapable of filling that role, and Diomedes, the best Achaean warrior in Achilles' absence, shows himself to be that leader. While *neikos* is not the speech genre most associated with the assembly, it is not foreign to collective deliberation. Roisman points out that even Nestor uses *neikos* in the assembly to great effect.³⁴ Diomedes' rebuke of Agamemnon at this moment is opportune since he is voicing disagreement with an Achaean elder in the assembly and must establish his right to dissent.³⁵ Diomedes has won this right with his spear, and he makes his dissent in public because he knows that the Achaeans, including the elder chieftains, are on his side.³⁶

³² The formula also introduces the speech of the γέρον Echeneus (*Od.* 7.155).

³³ E.g. Martin (n. 1), 125; Hainsworth (n. 2), 66–7; Christensen (n. 1), 149–50. E.T.E. Barker, *Entering the Agon* (Oxford, 2009), at 61–3, in a discussion of this speech, mistakenly equates dissent with 'fighting with words'. Dissent can be expressed by fighting with words but is not limited to it. The passage that he cites, μαχεσσαμένο ἐπέεσσιν (1.304), refers to a quarrel, which is different from dissent. Agamemnon and Achilles are not simply disagreeing. This 'fighting with words' is the explicit alternative to a physical fight, as Achilles states: χερσὶ μὲν οὐ τοι ἔγωγε μαχήσομαι (1.298). The use of μαχήσομαι by Diomedes (9.32) is equated to Agamemnon's chastisement in the *epipólēsis* (ἀλλκὴν μὲν μοι πρῶτον ὀνειδίσας ἐν Δαναοῖσι, 9.34).

³⁴ Roisman (n. 1), 28–9. The best examples are 2.337–8 and 7.124–9.

³⁵ See J. Palma Osses, 'Igualdad política como producto de la ética en el mundo homérico: el agon entre Diomedes y Agamenón en el canto IX de Iliada', *Historias del Orbis Terrarum* 14 (2015), 84–94 for Diomedes' performance in battle lending authority to his speech. Christensen (n. 1), 151 finds a youth challenging the commander-in-chief problematic.

³⁶ We can compare his use of *neikos* to that of Odysseus (14.82–102), which occurs in a similar situation. Odysseus replies in a speech that is entirely *neikos* and in which he is visibly angry (ὀπόδρα ἰδόν, 14.82). Agamemnon accepts the criticism and seeks a better plan. The plan, to which we shall return, comes from Diomedes. See also S. Montiglio, 'La menace du silence pour le héros de l'Iliade', *Métis* 8 (1993): 161–86, especially 164–5.

If the fault with Diomedes' speech is not the illocutionary aspect cited by Christensen,³⁷ we must still explain why it fails to reach the τέλος μύθων. The D-scholia suggest that the phrase alludes to the incompleteness of Diomedes' speech, namely, the failure to give the orders for making dinner and setting up the sentry, which Nestor's speech supplies.³⁸ Christensen dismisses this explanation as 'a little reductive';³⁹ however, the scholia may be right. For what Nestor does is make a declaration and go through everything (ἐξείπω καὶ πάντα δίζομαι, 9.61). The scholiast's reading is supported by another Iliadic passage. As discussed above, Odysseus intervenes in the assembly in Book 19 and advises Achilles to (1) permit the troops to ready their meals before and (2) accept the gifts promised by Agamemnon, as well as an oath that he never mounted Briseis' bed. Odysseus' speech provides reasoning for the troops eating before engaging in combat and lays out a plan for further action. Agamemnon praises it by saying that he has gone through and enumerated everything the right way (ἐν μοίρῃ γὰρ πάντα δίκαιο καὶ κατέλεξας, 19.186). This is exactly what Nestor purports to do in Book 9. His speech is not a rebuttal or modification of Diomedes' reply; it is a supplement. Nestor's main contribution, then, is the command to obey the night, fix meals and set guards at the ditch.

Hence the main fault with Diomedes' speech is that, even though it constitutes an effective reply to the question of whether the Achaeans should abandon the expedition, it is not actionable. Unlike Nestor, Diomedes does not make a proposal of the *πειθόμεθα*-type.⁴⁰ The purpose of Nestor's speech is to turn the deliberation between Agamemnon and Diomedes into policy. This is the prerogative of the elder statesman, and Diomedes is not an elder statesman just yet. Diomedes' subsequent speeches respond explicitly to Nestor's critique, or invitation perhaps,⁴¹ and show something much closer to a τέλος μύθων.

DIOMEDES THE ELDER

Diomedes' next speech takes place after the embassy returns to report its failure to convince Achilles to rejoin the fray and his plan to sail home the next day (9.693–711). The report has the same effect as Agamemnon's earlier proposal to abandon the expedition. There is silence and there is grief. Once again, the elder statesmen fail to address the situation. At last, Diomedes makes a response (9.696). The speech begins with a milder address to Agamemnon, 'Son of Atreus, most glorious Agamemnon, lord of men' (9.697). While criticizing Agamemnon's decision to send an embassy, Diomedes also allays the anxiety of the chieftains by offering hope that Achilles will return on his own. Most importantly, he offers a plan of action for the night and the following day. They will go to bed, partake of food and drink, and prepare to fight the next morning. The verb used for the command is *πειθόμεθα* 'let us obey' (9.704), the mark of an executive

³⁷ Christensen (n. 1), 150.

³⁸ For the scholia, see Christensen (n. 1), 156 n. 25.

³⁹ Christensen (n. 1), 148.

⁴⁰ Elmer (n. 1), 118 remarks that 'the deliberative context calls for a particular kind of speech act—a proposal—while Diomedes' speech appears anything but. It includes no direct address to the army as a whole, no hortatory subjunctive or plural imperative expressing an executable call to action.' The deliberative context, however, simply calls for a response to Agamemnon's proposal to abandon the expedition. See Andersen (n. 1), 120–1 for a more positive evaluation.

⁴¹ It is possible that Nestor feels indebted to Diomedes for saving his life in Book 8.

order uttered by an authoritative speaker.⁴² This speech earns the praise of all the chieftains (ὧς ἔφαθ', οἳ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπήνησαν βασιλῆς, 9.710 = 7.344).

Elmer has drawn attention to the importance of the verb ἐπαινεῖν in collective decision-making in the *Iliad*. According to him, it is 'the most efficient reception formula, the one that indicates the establishment of a true consensus'.⁴³ Yet, as Elmer notes, 'This consensus . . . is a limited one, representing only the collective will of the council elders.'⁴⁴ Limited as this consensus may be, receiving the ἔπαινος of the chieftains has enormous implications for Diomedes' standing among the Achaean elders. As noted earlier, Diomedes has already established himself as a man of counsel in the assembly, where he receives the shouting praise of the Achaeans (7.403 = 9.50). What he is missing—and what his speech at the end of Book 9 provides—is praise in the council of the elders. The only other speaker to receive ἔπαινος from all the βασιλῆς is Nestor himself, after his proposal to negotiate a truce to bury the dead and build a wall to protect the Achaean camp (7.344). Upon receiving ἔπαινος from all the chieftains, Diomedes sheds his status as a junior elder. He can subsequently speak without the need of a deferential pause and has the freedom to make proposals and commands.⁴⁵ This change is perhaps most evident in the formulas that introduce his speeches. While his first three speeches are introduced by the formula ὃς δὲ δὴ μετέειπε, his next two are introduced by the formula τοῖσι δὲ καὶ μετέειπε (10.219 = 14.109).⁴⁶

Diomedes' next speech comes in the *Doloneia* in response to Nestor's proposal in an *ad hoc* council that a hero go behind enemy lines to gather intelligence (10.203–17). Nestor's proposal is met with dramatic silence (10.218); Diomedes replies without taking a pause (τοῖσι δὲ καὶ μετέειπε, 10.219) and volunteers his services. The speech is that of a warrior and a man of counsel. For Diomedes does not merely undertake the mission; he also offers a significant modification to Nestor's plan, the addition of a second man.⁴⁷ Diomedes' appointment of Odysseus as his second proves decisive for the success of the mission.

The Trojan raid of the Achaean camp serves as the backdrop for Diomedes' last speech in the *Iliad*.⁴⁸ Nestor finds Agamemnon, Diomedes and Odysseus, now injured,

⁴² πεῖθόμεθα is used by Agamemnon (2.139, 9.26, 14.74), Nestor (9.65), Achilles (23.48), Diomedes (9.704) on the Greek side; Hector (8.502, 12.241, 18.297) and Polydamas (12.75) on the Trojan side; and Poseidon (14.370). It is also used by Thoas, leader of the Locrians (15.294), who is described as skilled in warfare and speech (15.282–4) but is not of the same rank as the other heroes. There must be something authoritative about Thoas, however, since Poseidon assumes his voice when rousing Idomeneus for his *aristeia* (13.215–20). On Thoas' training as a speaker see J.P. Christensen, 'Speech training and the mastery of context: Thoas the Aetolian and the practice of *muthoi*', in J.L. Ready and C.C. Tsagalis (edd.), *Homer in Performance* (Austin, 2018), 255–77, especially 260–70.

⁴³ Elmer (n. 1), 36.

⁴⁴ Elmer (n. 1), 124. Three other formulas use the verb ἐπαινεῖν in assembly-like settings: (1) ἐπὶ δ' ἦγεον ἄλλοι Ἀχαιοί (3.461) employed after Agamemnon declares Menelaus' victory over Paris; (2) ἐπήνεον ὡς ἐκέλευον (4.380 ~ 23.539) used of Tydeus' failed embassy to Mycenae as recalled by Agamemnon and in the dispute concerning the second prize for the chariot race; (3) ἐρδ' ἅτῳ οὐ τοι πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι (4.29, 16.443) used to express dissent among the Olympians.

⁴⁵ Andersen (n. 1), 122 and O'Maley (n. 1), 295 speak to the speech's success in relation to ἔπαινος, but do not describe the full implications for Diomedes' status.

⁴⁶ Like πεῖθόμεθα, the formula τοῖσι δὲ καὶ μετέειπε is only used to describe elder statesmen: Agamemnon (3.455, 10.233, 19.76), Menelaus (3.96), Nestor (2.336) and Achilles (23.889).

⁴⁷ Querbach (n. 1) finds a competitive spirit behind Diomedes' response to the embassy and his modifications of Nestor's counsels in Books 10 and 14.

⁴⁸ Schofield (n. 1), 23–5 offers a close reading of the passage and considers Diomedes an effective but inexperienced speaker. His stance is more laudatory at 30: 'It is consequently important for Homer to present Diomedes excelling in counsel as well as on the field of battle. His counsel is the opposite of Nestor's: forthright and uncomplicated.'

beside the ships (14.27–9). Agamemnon asks if Hector has made good on the promise to set fire to the Achaean fleet. Nestor reports that the wall has been breached and battle rages beside the ships; he then commands that they refrain from battle since they are wounded and cannot fight (14.61–3). For the third time, Agamemnon suggests that they abandon camp while they still can. Once again, he is met with reproof, this time from Odysseus, who delivers an effective *neikos* that brings Agamemnon to his senses. While Odysseus convinces Agamemnon that a retreat is impossible, he does not offer a solution for checking the Trojan onslaught. Agamemnon then makes a wish for someone with a better plan (τῆσδέ γ' ἄμεινονα μῆτιν, 14.107). His request for someone 'whether young or old' (ἦ νέος ἢ παλαιός, 14.108) appears to be aimed at Diomedes, who has proven himself a man of counsel and now enjoys the same rank as the king of Pylos.⁴⁹

Agamemnon's request for advice at this critical juncture in the narrative does not result in silence. He asks Diomedes for advice, and Diomedes gives it without hesitation. Just like his speech in the *Doloneia*, this speech is introduced by the formula τοῖσι δὲ καὶ μετέειπε (14.109). Diomedes prefaces his speech by excusing himself for his green age (καὶ μὴ τι κῶψ ἀγάσῃσθε ἕκαστος | οὐνεκα δὴ γενεῇφι νεώτατός εἰμι μεθ' ὑμῖν, 14.111–12), probably in answer to Nestor's remark in Book 9 (σεῖο γεραίτερος εὐχομαι εἶναι, 9.60). He pre-empts any possible dissent, a Nestorian tactic, by emphasizing his lineage and martial prowess (14.126–7), a response to Agamemnon's speech in the *epipôlēsis* (4.399–400). Finally, he tenders his proposal: they must go to the battlefield, wounded as they are, and rally the troops (δεῦρ' ἵομεν πόλεμόνδε καὶ οὐτάμενοι περ ἀνάγκῃ, 14.128). Diomedes' advice is in direct opposition to Nestor's suggestion that they do not re-enter battle (πόλεμον δ' οὐκ ἄμμε κελεύω δύμεναι, 14.62–3).⁵⁰ Diomedes' speech is heard and obeyed (οἱ δ' ἄρα τοῦ μάλα μὲν κλύον ἦδ' ἐπίθοντο, 14.133) with Agamemnon leading the way (14.134). The formula 'they heard and obeyed' is the response that effective speakers with authority receive, namely, Priam (7.379), Nestor (9.79), Poseidon (14.378) and Achilles (23.54, 23.738).⁵¹ Not only is Diomedes' last major speech in the *Iliad* effective, but it artfully responds to previous criticisms levelled against him by Nestor and Agamemnon, the two chief elders of the Achaean camp. The use of the 'they heard and obeyed' formula signals Diomedes' new status in the Achaean camp. He has proven himself one of the best warriors and Nestor's equal in counsel.⁵²

CONCLUSION

This article has shown that, though characterized as a young speaker in the *Iliad*, Diomedes is neither inexperienced nor immature. While Diomedes has not achieved the

⁴⁹ Agamemnon uses similar indirect language at 10.239 to keep Diomedes from selecting Menelaus as his partner in the night mission.

⁵⁰ *Contra* Roisman (n. 1), 21, who, in defence of Nestor, claims: 'In fact, Nestor's reservations about wounded men fighting (14.62–3) are taken into account in Diomedes' recommendation that the wounded warriors return to the battle but keep out of the path of the enemy's weapons, and are tacitly vindicated when the Achaean leaders adopt it (14.110–32).' Nestor recommends that they avoid the battlefield because they cannot fight; Diomedes proposes that they go, since it is still possible to rouse troops without engaging in combat (14.128–32).

⁵¹ On 'they heard and obeyed' see Elmer (n. 1), 24–5.

⁵² Ajax is described as second only to Achilles (2.768–9) but is bested by Diomedes in combat (23.820–5). Diomedes is one of the few granted the title ἀρίστος Ἀχαιῶν (5.103, 5.414) and is one of the three warriors considered a match for Hector by the Achaean host (7.175–80).

status of a chief γέρον at the beginning of the poem, it is not for lack of aptitude. Scholars often overlook that Diomedes arrives at Troy with a proven track record of leadership and military success. As Sthenelus remarks, Diomedes led the *epigonoι* in the successful expedition against Thebes (4.404–10).

Whitman observed that the *Iliad* is especially interested in the figure of Diomedes, who, in Achilles' absence, becomes, alongside Ajax, the most important warrior in the Achaean camp.⁵³ In effect, Diomedes does not just serve as foil to Achilles during his withdrawal from battle, but also as a model for the young hero. Part of the allure of Diomedes for the poets is his dynamism. He is an interloper in the tradition, who has not reached full status in the Achaean camp and, as such, can be shown to progress through the *cursus honorum* in both war and counsel without affecting the overarching plot of the poem.⁵⁴

From his first speech, Diomedes proves one of the most effective speakers in the *Iliad*. As the youngest of the γέροντες, his speeches afford us a glimpse into the decorum of collective decision-making in the poem, in which status conditions who can speak, when one can speak and what one can say. Agamemnon and Achilles, the γέροντες with the most authority, can call assemblies and ratify proposals. Nestor and Odysseus, who rank below these two heroes, can speak with freedom and offer proposals. Their speeches—especially those of Agamemnon, Nestor and Achilles—are characterized by certain features, such as the use of the hortative *πειθόμεθα* and immediate obedience to their proposals (*κλύον ἢ δὲ πίθοντο*).

The crisis in the Achaean camp precipitated by Achilles' departure results in the breakdown of leadership among the Achaean elders, and Diomedes seizes this opportunity to gain seniority as a statesman. Because of his youth, he cannot simply depend on his wits and must follow the decorum of the assembly. First, he must establish his right to speak through martial excellence. In the beginning, he is restricted to responses and speaks only after it is evident that his elders have nothing to say. This is the significance of the formula *ὄψε δὲ δὴ μετέειπε* in relation to the speeches of Diomedes. His first speech is to a foreign ambassador, Idaeus, the second to Agamemnon. At Nestor's prodding or invitation, he fulfils the *τέλος μύθων* by making a proposal of his own, which is met with the unanimous praise of the Greek chieftains. By the time of his last speech in Book 14, Diomedes has established himself as one of the chief councillors of the Achaean camp.

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⁵³ C. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), 165–9.

⁵⁴ Christensen (n. 1), 152 proposes that 'Diomedes is deployed in the epic to illustrate the travails of a young man who tries to use speech in accord with traditional expectations; he functions as a parallel for Achilles in the *Iliad*.' This remark echoes Andersen (n. 1), 147.