

## §9. Nestor



“Take me not further, I pray, but allow me to halt by my vessel,  
lest that the ancient king (as I fear) in his palace detain me,  
eager to show me a kindness – for home it is need that I hasten.”

– *Odyssey 15:199-201*

Telemachus will do anything rather than endure another of Nestor’s endless tales of himself. His son,, on agreeing to skip the return visit, says (209-214):

“Haste thee aboard, and the whole of they company bid to embark them,  
ere I arrive at the palace, and bring to my father the tidings,  
since right well do I know, in the mind and the spirit within me,  
such is his obstinate temper, he ne’er will allow thy departure;  
hither himself he will come to invite thee, nor ever, believe me,  
empty return; and despite thy excuse will be terribly angered.”

Thus does the *Odyssey* poet share with us a laugh at that old windbag, Nestor. We readers then need not blush at our own sense that Nestor goes on too long.<sup>1</sup> If this were all there were, this chapter could end here. But note just two things: (1) Nestor is not always prolix, and (2) there sometimes lingers about him the military wisdom that, after Linear B, we may associate with Nestor’s Pylos.

### The Nestor Speeches

This list indicates with an \*asterisk passages that seem not to be original, and by **emphasis** those which use his past exploits to establish his authority.

1:253-284 (33). attempts to calm the quarrel, but fails

\*2:78-83 (6). accepts the false dream as real, since Agamemnon reports it

\*2:337-368 (32). approves and reinforces what Odysseus has just said.

\*2:434-440 (7). voices what by then is the consensus: proceed to battle

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<sup>1</sup>For Phoinix, who it is hard not to take as a caricature of Nestor, see §10.