

## §42. Theoclymenos



Yea, and the walls are spattered with blood, and the beautiful alcoves.  
See too, crowded with ghosts is the porch, and crowded the courtyard,  
hurrying down to the darkness of Erebus! Out of the heaven  
withered and gone is the sun, and a poisonous mist is arising.

– *The vision of Theoclymenos, Odyssey 20:354-357*

So sees the seer as he stands before the feasting suitors. The Theoclymenos matter last came before the public in 1974,<sup>1</sup> and has been quiet since. We might skip it, but it is important in the larger picture. What are the main points?

First, the inserted nature of that last gruesome scene (20:350-372) shows, in that Theoclymenos is *not introduced* in that book; he is just suddenly there. So also with Theoclymenos' speech to Penelope in 17:150-165. This sort of narrative defect is not a typical author's slip; it suggests an interpolator.<sup>2</sup>

Second, what is the effect on performance modules if the Theoclymenos passages are removed? The shortest *Odyssey* module is *Od 6* (333 lines);<sup>3</sup> the longest, apart from the disturbed *Telemachus* books, is *Od 11* (640 lines). Several longer books have been resolved by removing plausible interpolations; no book so far examined is longer than 60 minutes. Here are the passages in which Theoclymenos appears, and the effect on the respective *Odyssey* books if those passages were removed:

Od 15. 557 - 104 > 453  
222-286 (65) Theoclymenos 1  
508-546 (39) Theoclymenos 2  
Od 17. 606 - 33 > 590  
150-165 (16) Theoclymenos 3  
Od 20. 394 -23 > 371  
350-372 (23) Theoclymenos 4

Eliminating Theoclymenos leaves *Od 20* in the usual *Odyssean* range, and brings the slightly long *Od 17* *within* that range. This is a net improvement.

<sup>1</sup>Page **Odyssey** 84ff and Kirk **Odyssey** 240f against; Fenik **Odyssey** 231-244 for.

<sup>2</sup>These proprieties *are* observed in *Od 17*.

<sup>3</sup>The *Odyssey* poet runs shorter than the *Iliad* poet. Though she has neatly arranged her material over 24 sessions (§32), that material is sometimes stretched thin, especially when no element of disguise or delay is involved, as in *Od 23*, the no-disguise scene between Penelope and Odysseus, at 372 lines (37 minutes).

Third, comedy. It is silly to have Telemachus, who cannot himself provide hospitality, refer Theoclymenos to his enemy, the richest suitor Eurynomos (15:518-524). That error is soon corrected (by an omen, which Theoclymenos reads as showing that Telemachus' family will hold power in Ithaka forever). He is then sent to lodge with Peiraios.<sup>4</sup> But notice that when Peiraios queries Telemachus in 17:71-85, it is about his *gifts*, not his *guest*.

Fourth, Theoclymenos is well worked in to the *Odyssey*. This extends to the story of the seer Melampus, told by the narrator at great length (15:225-255) in introducing Theoclymenos. More had been told of Melampus by Odysseus when he saw Chloris in the Underworld (11:281-297).<sup>5</sup> Both are long for the context in which they appear, and the Chloris scene is itself an interpolation (see §36). The methodological bottom line is: an interpolation cannot be used to establish the genuineness of another interpolation. If anything, the opposite.

Fifth, it may be relevant that other portents and omens seen in the landward part of the *Odyssey* come from Athena, in person or else in the guise of others, like Penelope's sister Iphthime (4:795f). There are no males in this category.<sup>6</sup> Is Theoclymenos an aspect of the beefing up (§33) of the *Odyssey*?

So goes the argument. We find for the prosecution. Either way, what about the stylistics? Do the widely separated Theoclymenos passages,<sup>7</sup> mixed as they are of several speakers, resemble each other stylistically? The crosstable is:

- |                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. 15:222-286 (65) | his approach            |
| 2. 15:508-546 (39) | Telemachus' hospitality |
| 3. 17:150-165 (16) | before Penelope         |
| 4. 20:350-372 (23) | before the suitors.     |

<i>Theo</i>	1	2	3	4
1	~	0-00	0-00	0-00
2	0-00	~	0-00	0-00
3	0-00	0-00	~	0-00
4	0-00	0-00	0-00	~

[Comment]

<sup>4</sup>Page 84-85 ridicules this unmercifully, which is impolite, and not to be approved, not even in a footnote; but was perhaps not entirely uncalled-for.

<sup>5</sup>Fenik 236 puts great stress on this; it is the heart of his defense. He shows (from Heubeck) how neatly the Theoclymenos and the Underworld accounts dovetail.

<sup>6</sup>Unless we count the eagle who identifies himself as Odysseus (19:535-558).

<sup>7</sup>Not that they include all relevant matter. Compare the uncanny 12:395f (the flesh of the slaughtered cattle of Helios) with the narrator's description of the suitors' meal (20:348), "Dabbled with gore was the meat of the banquet . . ."