

# The Odyssey

## BOOK TWENTY-TWO The Killing of the Suitors

[Odysseus stands in the doorway and shoots arrows at the suitors; he first kills Antinous; Eurymachus offers compensation for what the suitors have done; Odysseus kills him; Telemachus kills Amphinomus, then goes to fetch weapons from the storeroom; Melanthius reveals where the weapons are stored and gets some for the suitors; Eumaeus and Philoetius catch Melanthius and string him up to the rafters; Athena appears in the guise of Mentor to encourage Odysseus; Agelaus tries to rally the suitors; Odysseus, Telemachus, Eumaeus and Philoetius keep killing suitors until Athena makes the suitors panic; Leiodes seeks mercy from Odysseus but is killed; Odysseus spares Phemius and Medon; Odysseus questions Eurycleia about the women servants who have dishonoured him; he gets them to haul the bodies outside and clean up the hall; Telemachus hangs all the unfaithful female slaves; Melanthius is cut up and castrated; Odysseus purifies the house and yard; Odysseus is reunited with the faithful women servants]

Then shrewd Odysseus stripped off his rags, grabbed up  
the bow and quiver full of arrows, and sprang  
over to the large doorway. He dumped swift arrows  
right there at his feet and then addressed the suitors:

“This competition to decide the issue  
is now over. But there’s another target—  
one no man has ever struck—I’ll find out  
if I can hit it. May Apollo grant  
I get the glory.”

As Odysseus spoke,  
[10] he aimed a bitter arrow straight at Antinous,  
who was just about to raise up to his lips  
a fine double-handled goblet he was holding  
in his hands, so he could drink some wine. In his heart  
there was no thought of slaughter. Among those feasting,  
who would ever think, in such a crowd of people,  
one man, even with truly outstanding strength,  
would risk confronting evil death, his own black fate?  
Odysseus took aim and hit him with an arrow

in the throat. Its point passed through his tender neck.  
[20] He slumped over on his side, and, as he was hit,  
the cup fell from his hand. A thick spurt of human blood  
came flowing quickly from his nose. Then, suddenly  
he pushed the table from him with his foot, spilling  
food onto the floor—the bread and roasted meat  
were ruined. When the suitors saw Antinous fall,  
they raised an uproar in the house, leaping from their seats,  
scurrying in panic through the hall, looking round  
everywhere along the well-constructed walls,  
but there were no weapons anywhere, no strong spear  
[30] or shield for them to seize. They began to shout,  
yelling words of anger at Odysseus:

“Stranger,  
you’ll pay for shooting arrows at this man.  
For you there’ll be no contests any more.  
It’s certain you’ll be killed once and for all.  
You’ve killed a man, by far the finest youth  
in all of Ithaca. And now the vultures  
are going to eat you up right here.”

Each of them  
shouted out some words like these. They did not think  
he’d killed the man on purpose. In their foolishness,  
[40] they didn’t realize they’d all become caught up  
in destruction’s snare. Shrewd Odysseus scowled at them  
and gave his answer:

“You dogs, because you thought  
I’d not come back from Troy to my own home,  
you’ve been ravaging my house, raping women,  
and in your devious way wooing my wife,  
while I was still alive, with no fear of gods  
who hold wide heaven, or of any man  
who might take his revenge in days to come.  
And now a fatal net has caught you all.”

[50] As Odysseus said these words, pale fear seized everyone.

Each man looked around to see how he might flee  
complete destruction. Only Eurymachus spoke—  
he answered him and said:

“If, in fact, it’s true  
that you’re Odysseus of Ithaca,  
back home again, you’re right in what you say  
about the actions of Achaeans here,  
their frequent reckless conduct in your home,  
their many foolish actions in the fields.

But the man responsible for all this

[60] now lies dead—I mean Antinous, the one  
who started all this business, not because  
he was all that eager to get married—  
that’s not what he desired. No. For he had  
another plan in mind, which Cronos’ son  
did not bring to fulfillment. He wanted  
to become the king of fertile Ithaca,  
by ambushing your son and killing him.  
Now he himself has died, as he deserved.  
So at this point you spare your own people.

[70] Later on we’ll collect throughout the land  
repayment for all we’ve had to eat and drink  
inside your halls, and every man will bring  
compensation on his own, in an amount  
worth twenty oxen, paying you back in gold  
and bronze until your heart is mollified.  
Until that time, no one is blaming you  
for being so angry.”

Shrewd Odysseus glared at him  
and then replied:

“Eurymachus, if you gave me  
all the goods you got from your own fathers,

[80] everything which you now own, and added  
other assets you could obtain elsewhere,  
not even then would I hold back my hands  
from slaughter, not until the suitors pay  
for all their arrogance. Now you've a choice—  
to fight here face to face or, if any man  
wishes to evade his death and lethal fate,  
to run away. But I don't think there's one  
who will escape complete destruction."

Once Odysseus spoke, their knees and hearts went slack  
[90] right where they stood. Then Eurymachus spoke once more,  
calling out to them:

"Friends, this man won't hold in check  
those all-conquering hands of his. Instead,  
now he's got the polished bow and quiver,  
from that smooth threshold he'll just shoot at us  
until he's killed us all. So let's think now  
about how we should fight. Pull out your swords,  
and set tables up to block those arrows—  
they bring on death so fast. And then let's charge,  
go at him all together in a group,  
[100] so we can dislodge him from the threshold,  
clear the door, get down into the city,  
and raise the alarm as swiftly as we can.  
Then this man should soon take his final shot."

With these words, Eurymachus pulled out his sword,  
a sharp two-edged blade of bronze, and then charged out  
straight at Odysseus, with a blood-curdling shout.  
As he did so, lord Odysseus shot an arrow.  
It struck him in the chest beside the nipple  
and drove the swift shaft straight down into his liver.  
[110] Eurymachus' sword fell from his hand onto the ground.  
He bent double and then fell, writhing on the table,  
knocking food and two-handled cups onto the floor.

His forehead kept hammering the earth, his heart  
in agony, as both his feet kicked at the chair  
and made it shake. A mist fell over both his eyes.  
Then Amphinomus went at glorious Odysseus,  
charging straight for him. He'd drawn out his sharp sword,  
to see if he would somehow yield the door to him.  
But Telemachus moved in too quickly for him—  
[120] he threw a bronze-tipped spear and hit him from behind  
between the shoulders. He drove it through his chest.  
With a crash, Amphinomus fell, and his forehead  
struck hard against the ground. Telemachus jumped back,  
leaving his spear in Amphinomus, afraid that,  
if he tried to pull out the long-shadowed spear,  
some Achaean might attack and stab him with a sword  
or strike him while he was stooping down. And so  
he quickly ran away and then moved across  
to his dear father. Standing close to him, he spoke—  
his words had wings:

[130] “Father, now I’ll bring you  
a shield, two spears, and a bronze helmet,  
one that fits your temples. When I get back,  
I’ll arm myself and hand out other armour  
to the swineherd and the keeper of the goats.  
It’s better if we fully arm ourselves.”

Quick-witted Odysseus answered him and said:

“Get them here fast, while still I have arrows  
to protect myself, in case they push me  
from the doors, since I’m here by myself.”

[140] Odysseus spoke, and Telemachus obeyed  
his dear father. He went off to the storeroom  
where their splendid weapons lay. From the place  
he took four shields, eight spears, and four bronze helmets  
with thick horsehair plumes. He went out carrying these

and came back to his dear father very quickly.  
First he armed himself with bronze around his body,  
and the two servants did the same, putting on  
the lovely armour. Then they took their places  
on either side of skilled and sly Odysseus,  
[150] who, as long as he had arrows to protect him,  
kept on aiming at the suitors in his house,  
shooting at them one by one. As he hit them,  
they fell down in heaps. But once he'd used his arrows,  
the king could shoot no more. So he leaned the bow  
against the doorpost of the well-constructed wall,  
and let it stand beside the shining entrance way.  
Then on his own he set across his shoulders  
his four-layered shield, and on his powerful head  
he placed a beautifully crafted helmet  
[160] with horsehair nodding ominously on top.  
Then he grabbed two heavy bronze-tipped spears.

In that well-constructed wall there was a side door,  
and close to the upper level of the threshold  
into the sturdy hall the entrance to a passage,  
shut off with close-fitting doors. So Odysseus  
told the worthy swineherd to stand beside this door  
and watch, for there was just one way of reaching it.<sup>1</sup>  
Then Agelaus spoke, calling all the suitors:

“Friends, can someone climb up to that side door  
[170] and tell the men to raise a quick alarm?  
Then this man won't be shooting any more.”

But Melanthius the goatherd answered him and said:

“It can't be done, divinely raised Agelaus.  
The fine gate to the yard is awfully near,  
and the passage entrance hard to get through.<sup>2</sup>  
One man could block the way for everyone,  
if he were brave. But come, let me bring you

armour from the storeroom. You can put it on.  
It's in the house, I think—there's nowhere else  
[180] Odysseus and his noble son could store  
their weapons.”

Once goatherd Melanthius said this,  
he climbed a flight of stairs inside the palace,  
up to Odysseus' storerooms. There he took twelve shields,  
as many spears, as many helmets made of bronze  
with bushy horsehair plumes. Once he'd made it back,  
carrying the weapons, as quickly as he could  
he gave them to the suitors. When Odysseus saw them  
putting armour on and their hands brandishing  
long spears, his knees and his fond heart went slack.  
[190] His task appeared enormous. He called out quickly  
to Telemachus—his words had wings:

“Telemachus,  
it seems one of the women in the house  
is stirring up a nasty fight against us,  
or perhaps Melanthius might be the one.”

Shrewd Telemachus then said in reply:

“Father, I bear the blame for this myself.  
It's no one else's fault. I left it open—  
the close-fitting door of that storage room.  
One of them has keener eyes than I do.  
[200] Come, good Eumaeus, shut the storeroom door.  
And try to learn if one of the women  
has done this, or if it's Melanthius,  
son of Dolius—I suspect it's him.”

While they were saying these things to one another,  
Melanthius the goatherd went back once more  
to carry more fine armour from the storeroom.  
But the loyal swineherd saw him and spoke out,

saying a quick word to Odysseus, who was close by:

“Resourceful Odysseus, Laertes son,  
[210] raised from Zeus, there’s that man again,  
the wretch we think is visiting the storeroom.  
Give me clear instructions—Should I kill him,  
if I prove the stronger man, or should I  
bring him to you here?—he can pay you back  
for the many insolent acts he’s done,  
all those schemes he’s thought up in your home.”

Resourceful Odysseus then answered him and said:

“These proud suitors Telemachus and I  
will keep penned up here inside the hall,  
[220] no matter how ferociously they fight.  
You two twist Melanthius’ feet and arms  
behind him, throw him in the storeroom,  
then lash boards against his back. Tie the man  
to a twisted rope and then hoist him up  
the lofty pillar till he’s near the beams.  
Let him stay alive a while and suffer  
in agonizing pain.”

As Odysseus said this,  
they listened eagerly and then obeyed his words.  
They moved off to the storeroom, without being seen  
[230] by the man inside. He was, as it turned out, searching  
for weapons in a corner of the room. So then,  
when Melanthius the goatherd was coming out  
across the threshold, holding a lovely helmet  
in one hand and in the other an old broad shield  
covered in mould—one belonging to Laertes,  
which he used to carry as a youthful warrior,  
but which now was lying in storage, its seams  
unraveling on the straps—the two men jumped out  
and grabbed him. They dragged him inside by the hair,



[240] threw him on the ground—the man was terrified—  
and tied his feet and hands with heart-wrenching bonds.  
They lashed them tight behind his back, as Odysseus,  
Laertes' royal son, who had endured so much,  
had told them. They fixed a twisted rope to him,  
yanked him up the lofty pillar, and raised him  
near the roof beams. And then, swineherd Eumaeus,  
you taunted him and said:

“Now, Melanthius,  
you can really keep watch all night long,  
stretched out on a warm bed, as you deserve.

[250] You won't miss the golden throne of early Dawn,  
as she rises from the streams of Ocean—  
the very hour you've been bringing goats here,  
so the suitors can prepare their banquets  
in these halls.”

They left Melanthius there,  
tied up and hanging in bonds which would destroy him.  
The two put on their armour, closed the shining door,  
and made their way to wise and crafty Odysseus.  
Filled with fighting spirit, they stood there, four of them  
on the threshold, with many brave men in the hall.

[260] Then Athena, Zeus' daughter, came up to them,  
looking just like Mentor and with his voice, as well.  
Odysseus saw her and rejoiced. He cried:

“Mentor,  
help fight off disaster. Remember me,  
your dear comrade. I've done good things for you.  
You're my companion, someone my own age.”

Odysseus said this, thinking Mentor was, in fact,  
Athena, who incites armed men to action.  
From across the hall the suitors yelled:

“Mentor,  
don’t let what Odysseus says convince you  
[270] to fight the suitors and to stand by him.  
For this is how it will end up, I think,  
when our will prevails. Once we’ve killed these men,  
father and son, then you’ll be slaughtered, too,  
for all the things you’re keen to bring out  
here in the hall. You’re going to pay for it  
with your own head. Once our swords have sliced  
your strength from you, we’ll mix your property,  
all the things you have inside your home  
and in the fields, with what Odysseus owns.  
[280] We won’t allow your sons and daughters  
to live within your house or your dear wife  
to move in Ithaca, not in the city.”

After they said this, Athena in her heart  
grew very angry, and she rebuked Odysseus  
with heated words:

“Odysseus, you no longer have  
that firm spirit and force you once possessed  
when for nine years you fought against the Trojans  
over white-armed Helen, who was nobly born.  
You never stopped. You slaughtered many men  
[290] in fearful combat. Through your stratagems  
Priam’s city of broad streets was taken.  
So how come now, when you’ve come home  
among your own possessions, you’re moaning  
about acting bravely with these suitors?  
Come on, my friend, stand here beside me,  
see what I do, so you can understand  
the quality of Mentor, Alcimus’ son,  
when, surrounded by his enemies,  
he repays men who’ve acted well for him.”

[300] Athena spoke. But she did not give him the strength

to win that fight decisively. She was still testing  
the power and resolution of Odysseus  
and his splendid son. So she flew up to the roof  
inside the smoky hall, and sat there, taking on  
the appearance of a swallow.

Meanwhile the suitors  
were being driven into action by Agelaus,  
Damastor's son, by Eurynomus, Amphimedon,  
Demoptolemus, Peisander, Polyctor's son,  
and clever Polybus. Among the suitors still alive  
[310] these were the finest men by far. Odysseus' bow  
and his swift arrows had destroyed the others.  
Agelaus spoke to them, addressing everyone:

“Friends, this man's hands have been invincible,  
but now they'll stop. Mentor has moved away,  
once he'd made some empty boast. And now,  
they're left alone before the outer gates.  
So don't throw those long spears of yours at them,  
not all at once. Come, you six men throw first,  
to see if Zeus will let us strike Odysseus  
[320] and win the glory. Those others over there  
will be no trouble after he's collapsed.”

Agelaus spoke, and in their eagerness  
to follow what he'd said, they all hurled their spears.  
But Athena made sure their spear throws missed the mark.  
One man hit a door post in the well-built hall.  
Another struck the closely fitted door. One ash spear,  
weighted down with bronze, fell against the wall.  
When they'd escaped the suitor's spears, lord Odysseus,  
who'd been through so much, was the first to speak:

[330] “Friends, now I'll give the word—let's hurl our spears  
into that crowd of suitors trying to kill us,  
adding to the harmful acts they did before.”

Once Odysseus spoke, they all took steady aim,  
then threw their pointed spears. Odysseus struck down  
Demoptolemus, Telemachus hit Euryades,  
the swineherd struck Elatus, and the cattle herder  
killed Peisander. These men's teeth chewed up the earth,  
all of them together. The suitors then pulled back  
into the inner section of the hall. The others  
[340] then rushed up to pull their spears out of the dead.  
The suitors kept throwing spears with frantic haste,  
but, though there were many, Athena made them miss.  
One man struck the door post of the well-built hall.  
Another hit the closely fitted door. One ash spear,  
weighted down with bronze, fell against the wall.  
But Amphimedon did hit Telemachus' hand  
a glancing blow across the wrist. The bronze point  
cut the surface of his skin. And with his long spear  
Ctessipus grazed Eumaeus' shoulder above his shield,  
[350] but the spear veered off and fell down on the ground.  
Then the group surrounding sly and shrewd Odysseus  
once more threw sharp spears into the crowd of suitors,  
and once again Odysseus, sacker of cities,  
hit a man—Eurydamas—while Telemachus  
struck Amphimedon, and swineherd Eumaeus  
hit Polybus. The cattle herder Philoetius  
then struck Ctesippus in the chest and boasted  
above the body, saying:

“Son of Polytherses,  
you love to jeer—but don't yield any more  
[360] to your stupidity and talk so big.  
Leave that sort of boasting to the gods,  
for they are far more powerful than you.  
This is your guest gift—something to pay back  
the ox hoof you gave godlike Odysseus  
back when he was begging in the house.”

That's what the herder of the bent-horned cattle said.  
At close range Odysseus wounded Damastor's son  
with his long spear, and Telemachus injured  
Leocritus, son of Evenor—he struck him  
[370] with his spear right in the groin and drove the bronze  
straight through—so Leocritus fell on his face,  
his whole forehead smashing down onto the ground.  
Then Athena held up her man-destroying aegis  
from high up in the roof.<sup>3</sup> The suitors' minds panicked,  
and they fled through the hall, like a herd of cattle  
when a stinging gadfly goads them to stampede,  
in spring season, when the long days come. Just as  
the falcons with hooked talons and curved beaks  
fly down from mountains, chasing birds and driving them  
[380] well below the clouds, as they swoop along the plain,  
and then pounce and kill them, for there's no defence,  
no flying away, while men get pleasure from the chase,  
that's how Odysseus and his men pursued the suitors  
and struck them down, one by one, throughout the hall.  
As they smashed their heads in, dreadful groans arose,  
and the whole floor was awash in blood.

But then,  
Leiodes ran out, grabbed Odysseus' knees,  
and begged him—his words had wings:

“Odysseus,  
I implore you at your knees—respect me  
[390] and have pity. I tell you I've never  
harmed a single woman in these halls  
by saying or doing something reckless.  
Instead I tried to stop the other suitors  
when they did those things. They didn't listen  
or restrain their hands from acting badly.  
So their own wickedness now brings about  
their wretched fate. Among them I'm a prophet  
who has done no wrong, and yet I'll lie dead,

since there's no future thanks for one's good deeds."

Shrewd Odysseus glared at him and answered:

[400] "If, in fact,  
you claim to be a prophet with these men,  
no doubt here in these halls you've often prayed  
that my goal of a sweet return would stay  
remote from me, so my dear wife could go  
away with you and bear your children.  
That's why you won't escape a bitter death."

As he said this, Odysseus picked up in his fist  
a sword that lay near by—Agelaus, when he was killed,  
had let it fall onto the ground. With this sword  
[410] Odysseus struck Leiodes right on the neck—  
his head rolled in the dust as he was speaking.

And then the minstrel Phemius, son of Terpes,  
who'd been compelled to sing before the suitors,  
kept trying to get away from his own murky fate.  
He stood holding his clear-toned lyre by the side door,  
his mind divided—should he slip out from the hall  
and take a seat close to the altar of great Zeus,  
god of the courtyard, where Laertes and Odysseus  
had burned many thighs from sacrificial oxen,  
[420] or should he rush up to Odysseus' knee  
and beg him for his life. As his mind thought it through,  
the latter course of action seemed the better choice,  
to clasp the knees of Laertes' son, Odysseus.  
So he set the hollow lyre down on the ground,  
between the mixing bowl and silver-studded chair,  
rushed out in person to clasp Odysseus' knees,  
and pleaded with him—his words had wings:

"I implore you, Odysseus, show me respect  
and pity. There'll be sorrow for you later,

[430] if you kill me, a minstrel, for I sing  
to gods and men. I am self taught. The god  
has planted in my heart all kinds of songs,  
and I'm good enough to sing before you,  
as to a god. Don't be too eager then  
to cut my throat. Your dear son Telemachus  
could tell you that it wasn't my desire  
nor did I need to spend time at your house,  
singing for the suitors at their banquets.  
But their greater power and numbers  
brought me here by force."

[440] As Phemius said this,  
royal Telemachus heard him and spoke up,  
calling to his father, who was close by:

"Hold on. Don't let your sword injure this man.  
He's innocent. We should save Medon, too,  
the herald, who always looked out for me  
inside the house when I was still a child,  
unless Philoetius has killed him,  
or the swineherd, or he ran into you  
as you were on the rampage in the hall."

[450] Telemachus spoke. Medon, whose mind was clever,  
heard him, for he was cowering underneath a chair,  
his skin covered by a new-flayed ox-hide, trying  
to escape his own black fate. He quickly jumped out  
from beneath the chair, threw off the ox-hide,  
rushed up to clasp Telemachus' knees, and begged—  
his words had wings:

"Here I am, my friend.  
Stop! And tell your father to restrain himself,  
in case, as he exults in his great power,  
he slaughters me with that sharp bronze of his,  
[460] in his fury with the suitors, those men

who consumed his goods here in his own hall,  
those fools who did not honour you at all.”

Resourceful Odysseus then smiled at him and said:

“Cheer up! This man here has saved your life.  
He’s rescued you, so you know in your heart  
and can tell someone else how doing good  
is preferable by far to acting badly.  
But move out of the hall and sit outside,  
in the yard, some distance from the killing,  
[470] you and the minstrel with so many songs,  
until I finish all I need to do in here.”

After Odysseus spoke, the two men went away,  
outside the hall, and sat down there, by the altar  
of great Zeus, peering round in all directions,  
always thinking they’d be killed.

Odysseus, too,  
looked round the house to check if anyone  
was hiding there, still alive, trying to escape  
his own dark fate. But every man he looked at—  
and there were many—had fallen in blood and dust,  
[480] like fish which, in the meshes of a net, fishermen  
have pulled from the gray sea up on the curving beach,  
lying piled up on the sand, longing for sea waves,  
while the bright sun takes away their life—that’s how  
the suitors then were lying in heaps on one another.

Resourceful Odysseus then said to Telemachus:

“Telemachus, go and call the nurse in here,  
Eurycleia, so I can speak to her.  
Something’s on my mind—I want to tell her.”

Once Odysseus spoke, Telemachus obeyed



[490] what his dear father said. He shook the door and called  
to Eurycleia, saying:<sup>4</sup>

“Get up, old woman,  
born so long ago—the one in charge  
of female servants in the palace.  
Come out. My father’s calling for you.  
He’s got something he wants to say.”

He spoke. But Eurycleia’s words could find no wings.  
She opened up the door of the well-furnished hall  
and came out. Telemachus went first and led the way.  
There she found Odysseus with the bodies of the dead,  
[500] spattered with blood and gore, like a lion moving off  
from feeding on a farmyard ox, his whole chest  
and both sides of his muzzle caked with blood,  
a terrifying sight, that’s how Odysseus looked,  
with bloodstained feet and upper arms. Eurycleia,  
once she saw the bodies and huge amounts of blood,  
was ready to cry out for joy now that she’d seen  
such a mighty act. But Odysseus held her back  
and checked her eagerness. He spoke to her—  
his words had wings:

“Old woman, you can rejoice  
[510] in your own heart—but don’t cry out aloud.  
Restrain yourself. For it’s a sacrilege  
to boast above the bodies of the slain.  
Divine Fate and their own reckless actions  
have killed these men, who failed to honour  
any man on earth who came among them,  
bad or good. And so through their depravity  
they’ve met an evil fate. But come now,  
tell me about the women in these halls,  
the ones who disrespect me and the ones  
who bear no blame.”

[520] His dear nurse Eurycleia  
then answered him and said:

“All right my child,  
I’ll tell you the truth. In these halls of yours,  
there are fifty female servants, women  
we have taught to carry out their work,  
to comb out wool and bear their slavery.  
Of these, twelve in all have gone along  
without a sense of shame and no respect  
for me or even for Penelope herself.  
Telemachus has only just grown up,

[530] and his mother hasn’t let him yet control  
our female servants. But come, let’s go now  
to that bright upstairs room and tell your wife.  
Some god has made her sleep.”

Resourceful Odysseus  
then answered her and said:

“Don’t wake her up.  
Not yet. Those women who before all this  
behaved so badly, tell them to come here.”

Once he’d said this, the old woman went through the house  
to tell the women the news and urge them to appear.

Odysseus then called Telemachus to him,  
[540] together with Eumaeus and Philoetius.  
He spoke to them—his words had wings:

“Start carrying those corpses outside now,  
and then take charge of the servant women.  
Have these splendid chairs and tables cleaned,  
wiped with porous sponges soaked in water.  
Once you’ve put the entire house in order,  
then take those servants from the well-built hall  
to a spot outside between the round house

and the sturdy courtyard wall and kill them.  
[550] Slash them with long swords, until the life is gone  
from all of them, and they've forgotten  
Aphrodite and how they loved the suitors  
when they had sex with them in secret."

Odysseus spoke. Then the crowd of women came,  
wailing plaintively and shedding many tears.  
First they gathered up the corpses of the dead  
and laid them out underneath the portico,  
leaning them against each other in the well-fenced yard.  
Odysseus himself gave them their instructions  
[560] and hurried on the work. The women were compelled  
to carry out the dead. After that, they cleaned  
the splendid chairs and tables, wiping them down  
with water and porous sponges. Telemachus,  
along with Philoetius and Eumaeus,  
with shovels scraped the floor inside the well-built hall,  
and women took the dirt and threw it in the yard.  
When they'd put the entire hall in order,  
they led the women out of the sturdy house  
to a place between the round house and fine wall  
[570] round the courtyard, herding them into a narrow space  
where there was no way to escape. Shrewd Telemachus  
began by speaking to the other two:

"I don't want  
to take these women's lives with a clean death.  
They've poured insults on my head, on my mother,  
and were always sleeping with the suitors."

He spoke, then tied the cable of a dark-prowed ship  
to a large pillar, threw one end above the round house,  
then pulled it taut and high, so no woman's foot  
could reach the ground. Just as doves or long-winged thrushes  
[580] charge into a snare set in a thicket, as they seek out  
their roosting place, and find out they've been welcomed

by a dreadful bed, that's how those women held their heads  
all in a row, with nooses fixed around their necks,  
so they'd have a pitiful death. For a little while  
they twitched their feet, but that did not last long.

Then they brought Melanthius out through the doorway  
into the yard. With pitiless bronze they sliced away  
his nose and ears, then ripped off his cock and balls  
as raw meat for dogs to eat, and in their rage  
[590] hacked off his hands and feet. After they'd done that,  
they washed their hands and feet and went inside the house,  
back to Odysseus. Their work was done. But he  
called out to Eurycleia, his dear nurse:

“Old woman,  
bring sulphur here to purify the house.  
And bring me fire so I can purge the hall.  
Ask Penelope to come here with her slaves,  
and get all the women in the house to come.”

His dear nurse Eurycleia answered him:

“My child,  
what you say is all well and good, but come,  
[600] I'll fetch you clothing, a cloak and tunic,  
so you don't stand like this in your own hall  
with nothing but rags on your wide shoulders.  
That would be the cause of some disgrace.”

Resourceful Odysseus then answered her and said:

“But first make me a fire in the hall.”

Dear nurse Eurycleia then followed what he'd said.  
She brought fire and sulphur, so Odysseus  
purged the house and yard completely. Eurycleia  
went back through Odysseus' splendid home to tell

[610] the women what had happened and to order them  
to reappear. They came out holding torches,  
then gathered round Odysseus, embracing him.  
They clasped and kissed his head, his hands, and shoulders,  
in loving welcome. A sweet longing seized him  
to sigh and weep, for in his heart he knew them all.