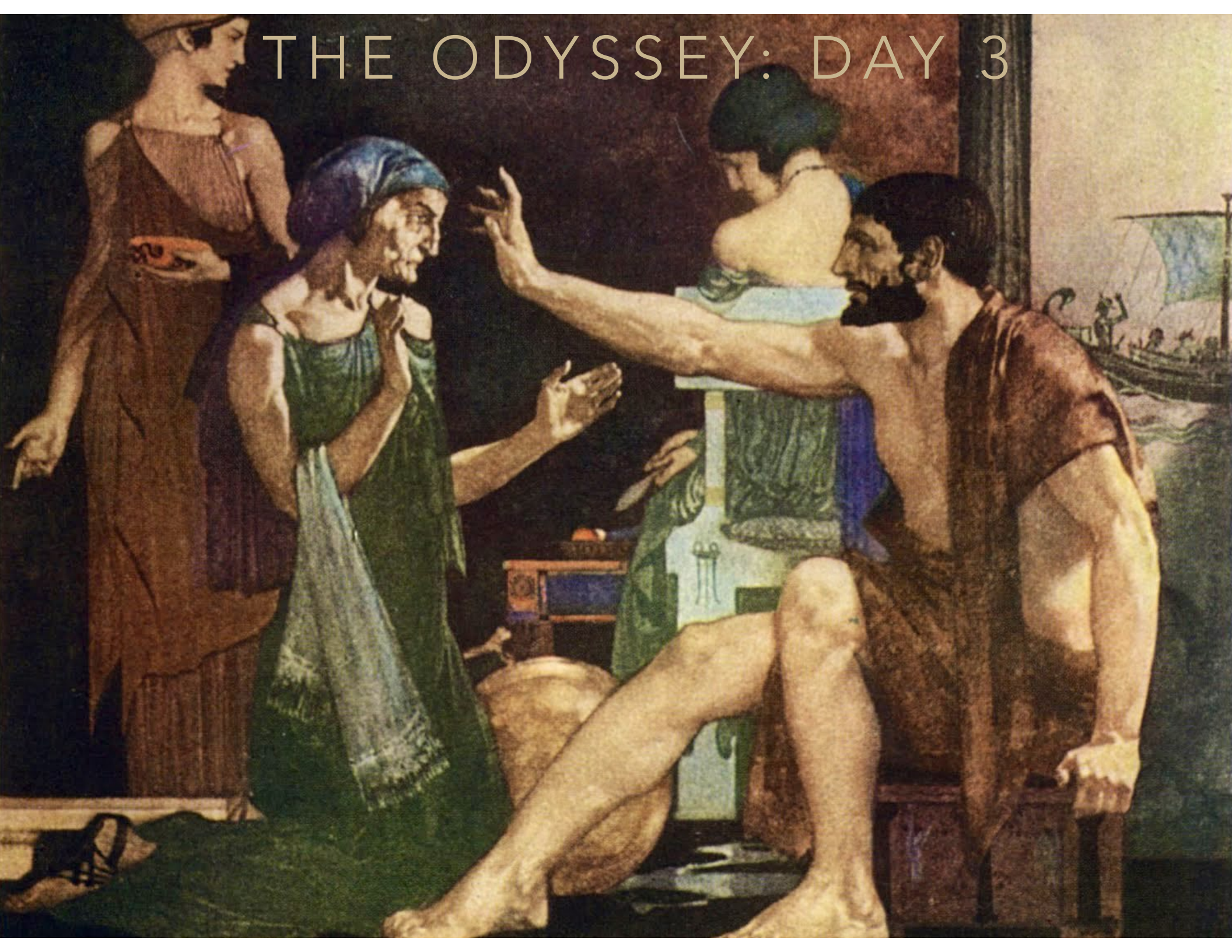


# THE ODYSSEY: DAY 3





# TANTALUS

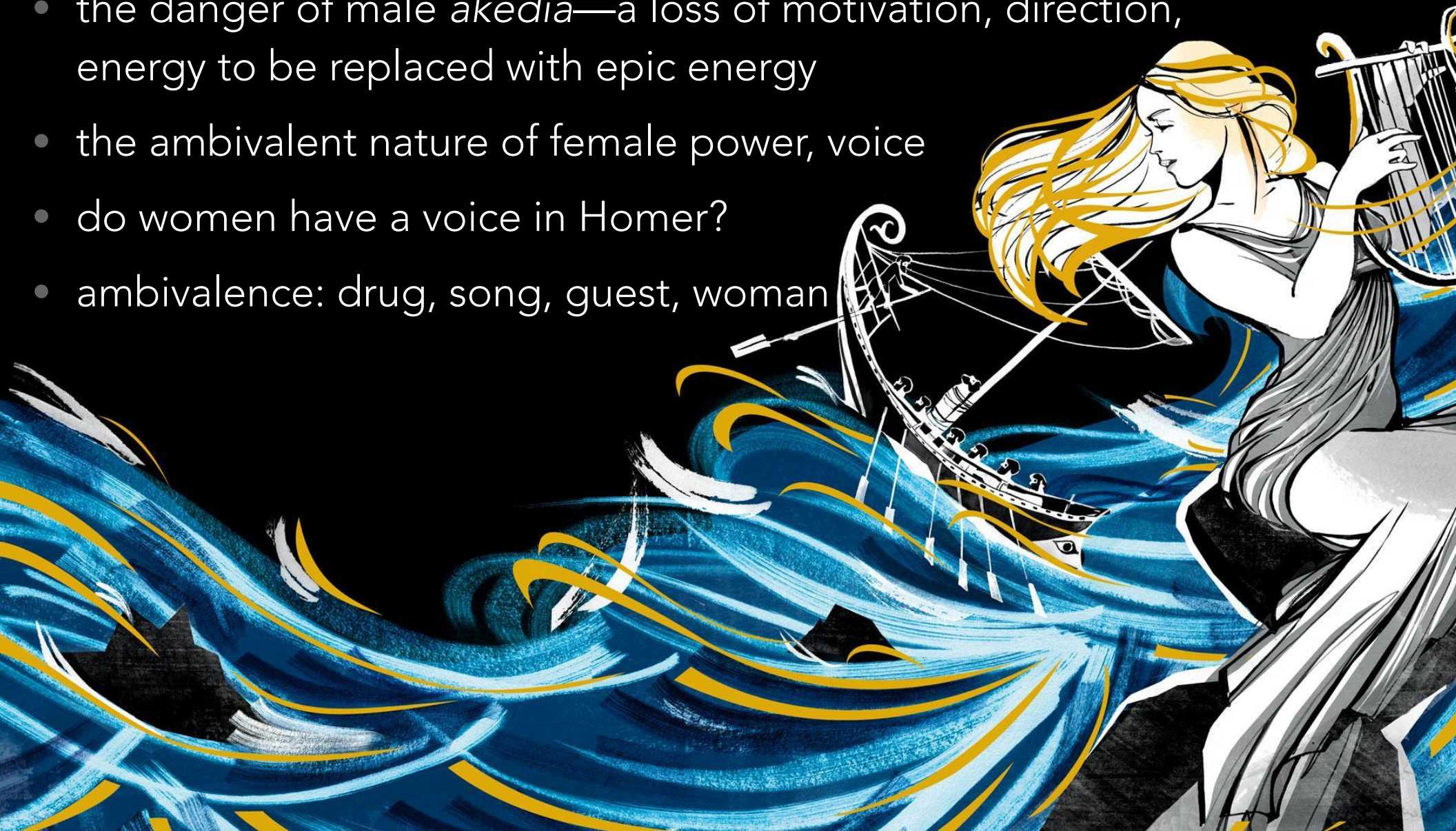
- Invited to dine with the gods (hospitality!), he instead steals their nectar and ambrosia
- He kills his own son, Pelops, boils him and serves him to the gods (hospitality!) to test their omniscience. They don't eat it.
- Demeter, distracted by grief over her daughter, however, eats one of Pelops' shoulders
- Clotho, the Fate, is ordered to "un-boil" Pelops and brings him back to life. Hephaestus (Vulcan), makes him a prosthetic shoulder





RUM

- hospitality as radically ambiguous: a moment of danger (who am I letting into my home?), but also of social and moral necessity: *hospes* = host, guest (hospitality, hostility)
- the danger of male *akedia*—a loss of motivation, direction, energy to be replaced with epic energy
- the ambivalent nature of female power, voice
- do women have a voice in Homer?
- ambivalence: drug, song, guest, woman



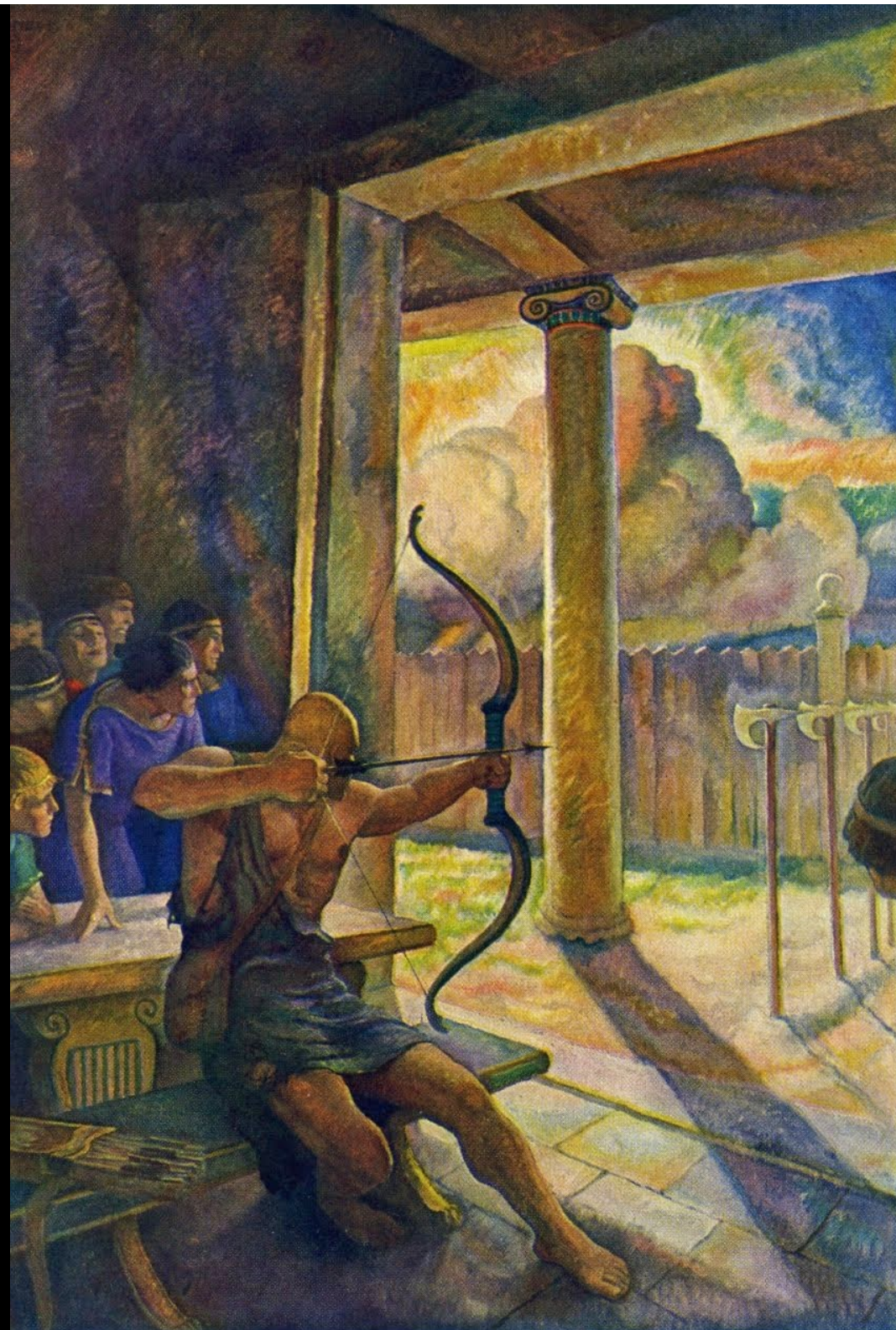
# BOOKS 19,20

- Book 19: Odysseus and Telemachus plan how to kill the suitors and hide weapons. Penelope comes to the beggar, asks him to tell her of Odysseus, and he does; when the old maid washes the beggar's feet, she recognizes a scar from when Odysseus went boar hunting as a young man
- Book 20: Penelope and Odysseus sleep badly, fearing what the next day will bring; more tension, insults



# BOOK 21

- The trial of the axes: String the bow (strength) and shoot an arrow through twelve axe heads (precision)
- First Telemachus, then all suitors fail; Odysseus, in disguise, succeeds on his first attempt
- Building action to the climax in the next chapter; a kind of sensual tension of expectation —culminates when all are locked in; the suitors and Odysseus must fight
- Everyone begins to change



“The lustrous queen soon reached the hidden vault and stopped at the oaken doorsill, work an expert sanded smooth and trued to the line some years ago, planting the doorjambs snugly, hanging shining doors. At once she loosed the thong from around its hook, inserted the key and, aiming straight and true, shot back the bolts — and the rasping doors groaned as loud as a bull will bellow, champing grass at pasture.”

—BOOK XXI, 50-57



“So, mother,  
go back to your quarters. Tend to your own tasks,  
the distaff and the loom, and keep the women  
working hard as well. As for the bow now,  
men will see to that, but I most of all:  
I hold the reins of power in this house.”

-TELEMACHUS IN BOOK XXI, 389-94

“Then, like an expert singer skilled at lyre and song —  
who strains a string to a new peg with ease,  
making the pliant sheep-gut fast at either end —  
so with his virtuoso ease Odysseus strung his mighty bow.  
Quickly his right hand plucked the string to test its pitch  
and under his touch it sang out clear and sharp as a swallow’s cry.”

–BOOK XXI, 453-58

# BOOK 22

- The climax of the story: the slaughter of the suitors
- Extremely graphic and precise; the *grotesque*
- Success against tremendous odds (hence honor)
- Leodes surrenders, begs for his life; the strangling of the women
- Honor and shame: ritual purification
- Action hero irony: "Let me just finish my chores"



“But Odysseus aimed and shot Antinous square in the throat  
and the point went stabbing clean through the soft neck and out —  
and off to the side he pitched, the cup dropped from his grasp  
as the shaft sank home, and the man’s life-blood came spurting  
from his nostrils —  
thick red jets —  
a sudden thrust of his foot —  
he kicked away the table —  
food showered across the floor,  
the bread and meats soaked in a swirl of bloody filth.”

—BOOK XXII, 15-20



“I hug your knees, Odysseus — mercy! spare my life!  
Never, I swear, did I harass any woman in your house —  
never a word, a gesture — nothing, no, I tried  
to restrain the suitors, whoever did such things.  
They wouldn’t listen, keep their hands to themselves —  
so reckless, so they earn their shameful fate.  
But I was just their prophet —  
my hands are clean — and I’m to die their death!  
Look at the thanks I get for years of service!”

—BOOK XXII, 327-35

A killing look, and the wry soldier answered,  
“Only a priest, a prophet for this mob, you say?  
How hard you must have prayed in my own house  
that the heady day of my return would never come.  
my dear wife would be yours, would bear your children!  
For that there’s no escape from grueling death — you die!

-BOOK XXII, 336-41

“No more shooting off your mouth, you idiot, such big talk —  
Take this spear, this guest-gift, for the cow’s hoof  
you once gave King Odysseus begging in his house!”

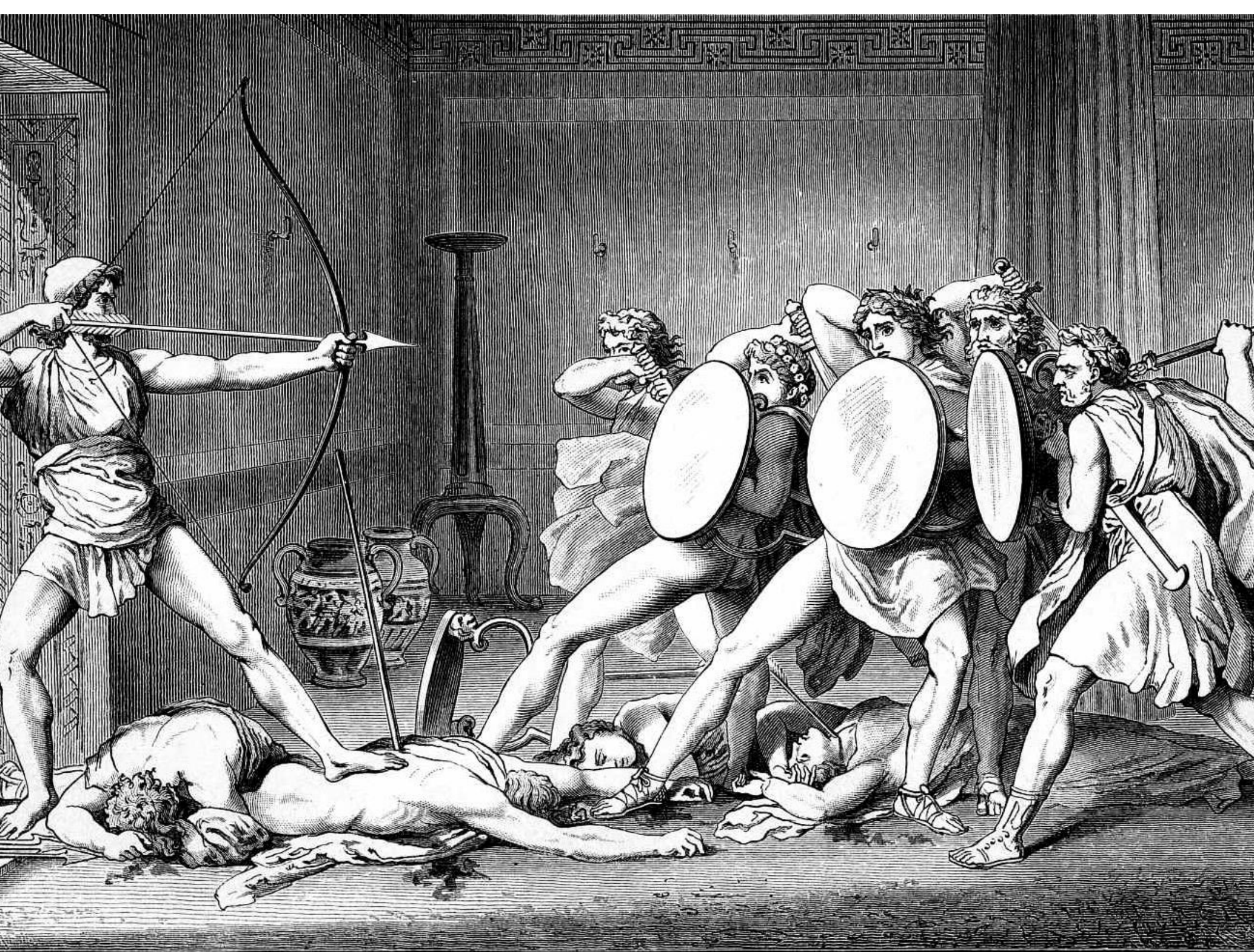
–PHILOETIUS THE COWHERD, AS HE IS KILLING  
CTESSIPUS

“Wait till I’ve done some household chores  
that call for my attention.”

–ODYSSEUS TO MEDON, BEFORE HE HAS THE  
FAITHLESS WOMEN STRANGLER

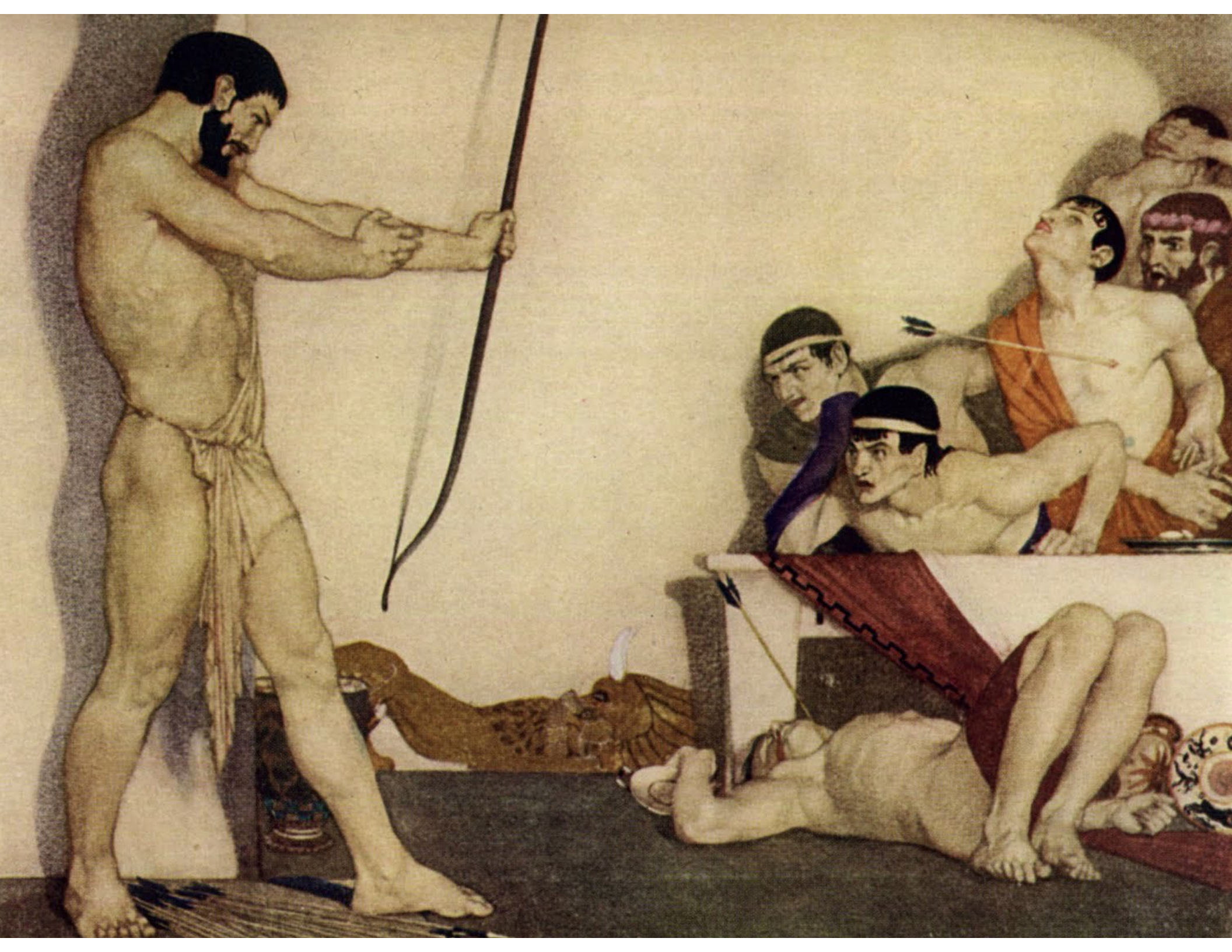








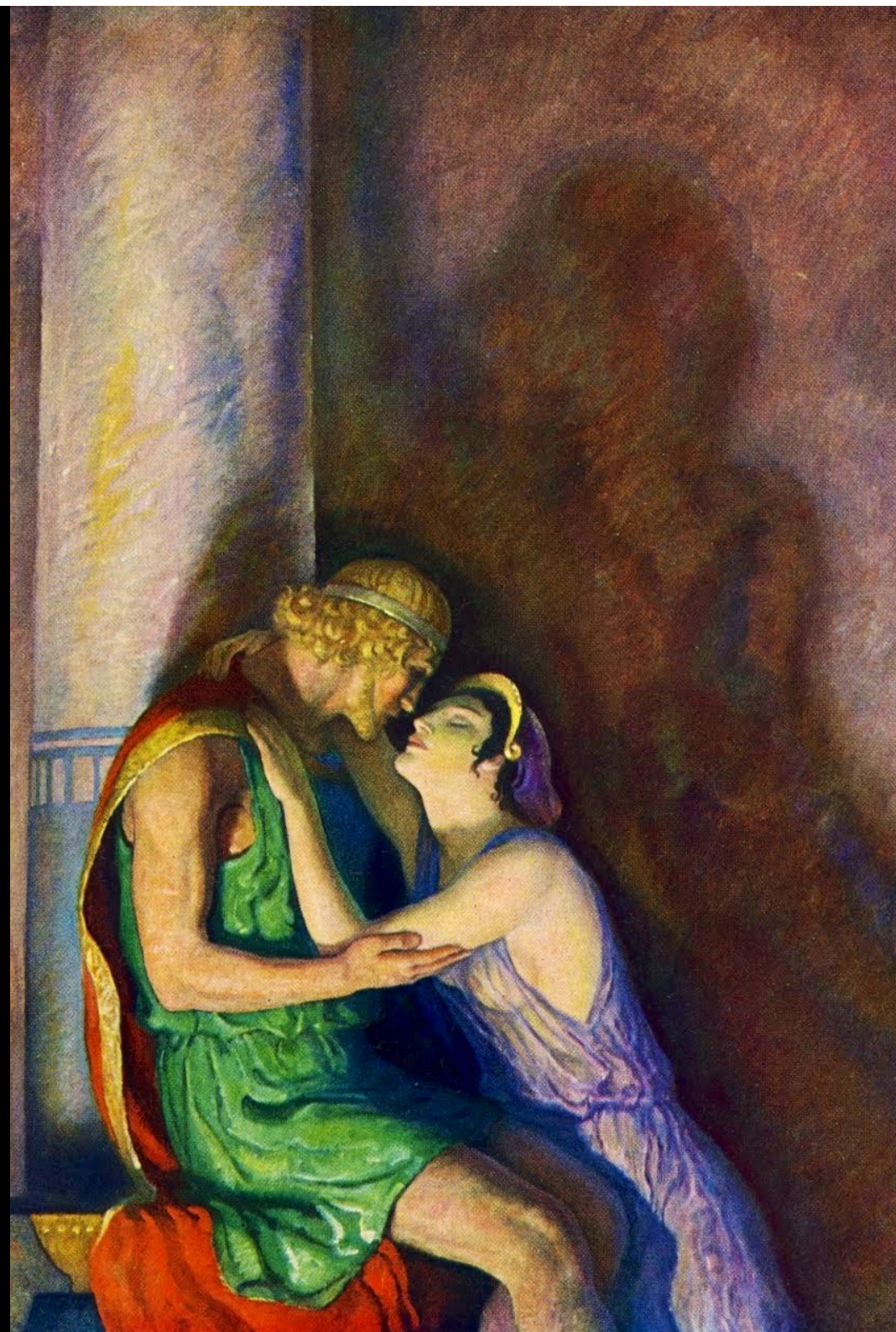






# BOOK 23

- Penelope sleeps through the whole thing? Is this woman deaf?
- One last trial of Odysseus: the bed trick. Odysseus is clever, but so is she
- A constant back-and-forth of obstacle and overcoming
- External barriers are easy in the ancient world; internal ones are hard, especially belief and trust
- Wait! Odysseus *still* isn't done?







“Not once have I slept so soundly since the day  
Odysseus sailed away to see that cursed city...  
*Destroy, I call it — I hate to say its name!*”

“οὐ γάρ πω τοιόνδε κατέδραθον, ἐξ οὗ Ὀδυσσεὺς  
ᾤχετ' ἐποψόμενος **Κακοῖλιον** οὐκ ὀνομαστήν.  
ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν κατάβηθι καὶ ἄψ ἔρχεαι μέγαρόνδε.”

—PUNNING PENELOPE

The prophet said  
that I must rove through towns on towns of men,  
that I must carry a well-planed oar until  
I come to a people who know nothing of the sea,  
whose food is never seasoned with salt, strangers all  
to ships with their crimson prows and long  
wings that make ships fly. And here is my sign,  
he told me, clear, so clear I cannot miss it,  
and I will share it with you now...

-ODYSSEUS, THE FINAL JOURNEY

When another traveler falls in with me and calls  
that weight across my shoulder a fan to winnow grain,  
then, he told me, I must plant my oar in the earth  
and sacrifice fine beasts to the lord god of the sea,  
Poseidon — a ram, a bull and a ramping wild boar —  
then journey home and render noble offerings up  
to the deathless gods who rule the vaulting skies,  
to all the gods in order.

And at last my own death will steal upon me...  
a gentle, painless death, far from the sea it comes  
to take me down, borne down with the years in ripe old age  
with all my people here in blessed peace.

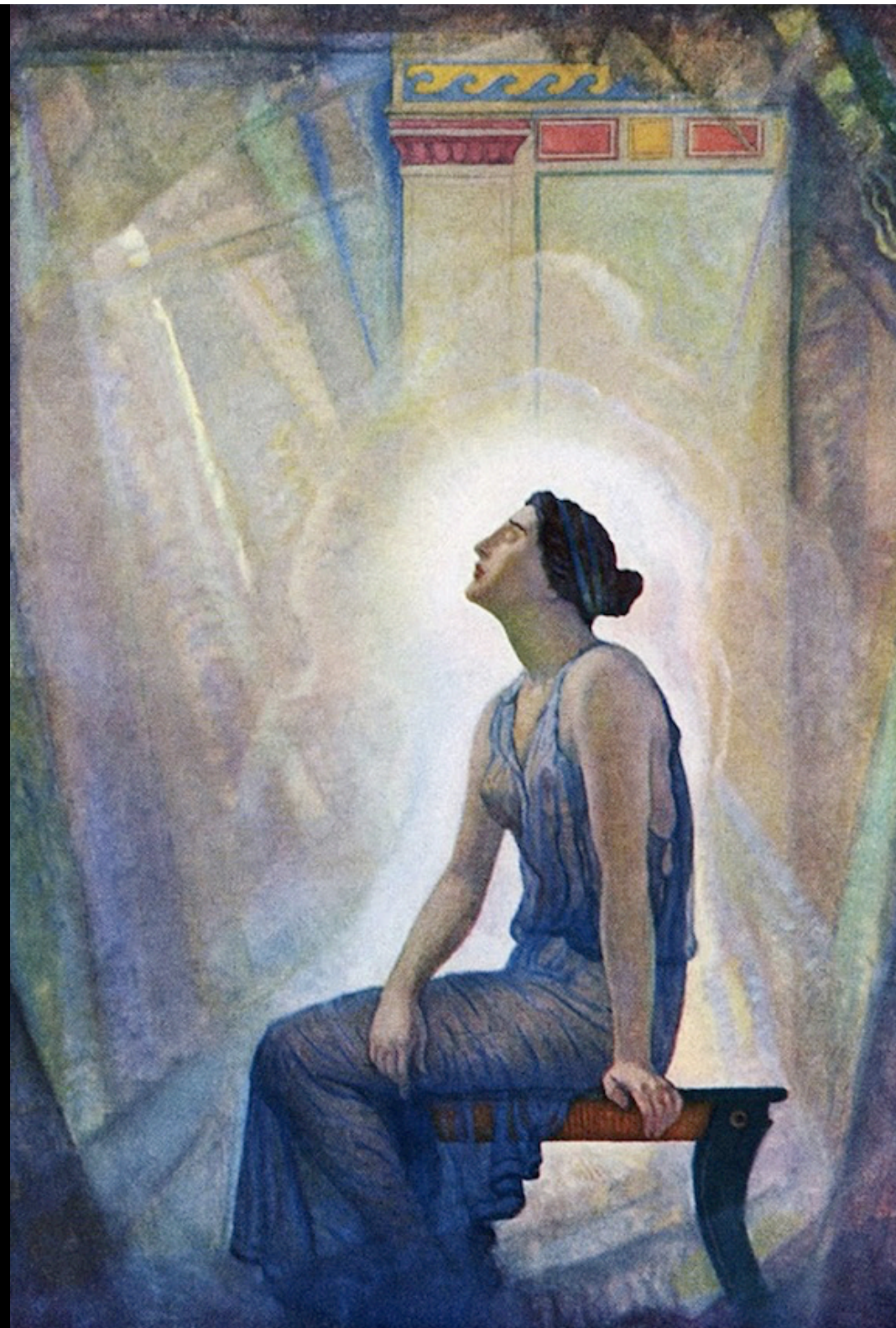
-ODYSSEUS, THE FINAL JOURNEY

ΑΘΗΝΗ



# BOOK 24

- An abrupt switch to the underworld, and one more time...Agamemnon and Orestes!
- The constancy of Penelope contrasted to the wickedness of Clytemnestra.
- If honor and shame are in fact the consummate values for the ancient Greeks, then everything actually depends on the women.
- One could (perhaps should) re-write *The Odyssey* from the perspective of the women characters who are so crucial, but who do not tell their own stories.





# The Penelopiad

BY  
MARGARET ATWOOD



THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR OF THE SONG OF ACHILLES



# CIRCE

A  
NOVEL

MADELINE MILLER

