

# BOOK 17:

## *The Beggar at the Manor*

*Telemachus returns home, and Odysseus and the swineherd soon follow.  
Odysseus is still disguised as a beggar.*

While he spoke

an old hound, lying near, pricked up his ears  
and lifted up his muzzle. This was Argos,  
trained as a puppy by Odysseus,  
5 but never taken on a hunt before  
his master sailed for Troy. The young men, afterward,  
hunted wild goats with him, and hare, and deer,  
but he had grown old in his master's absence.  
Treated as rubbish now, he lay at last  
10 upon a mass of dung before the gates—  
manure of mules and cows, piled there until  
fieldhands could spread it on the king's estate.  
Abandoned there, and half destroyed with flies,  
old Argos lay.

But when he knew he heard

15 Odysseus' voice nearby, he did his best  
to wag his tail, nose down, with flattened ears,  
having no strength to move nearer his master.  
And the man looked away,  
wiping a salt tear from his cheek; but he  
20 hid this from Eumaeus. Then he said:

"I marvel that they leave this hound to lie  
here on the dung pile;  
he would have been a fine dog, from the look of him,  
though I can't say as to his power and speed  
25 when he was young. You find the same good build  
in house dogs, table dogs landowners keep  
all for style."

And you replied, Eumaeus:

"A hunter owned him—but the man is dead  
in some far place. If this old hound could show

### ANALYZE VISUALS

This illustration of Odysseus and his dog comes from the late 19th or early 20th century. Compare it with the scene depicted on the clay urn shown on page 1093. What elements do the two pieces have in common?



*Ulysses and His Dog* (about 1900). © Bettman/Corbis.

30 the form he had when Lord Odysseus left him,  
going to Troy, you'd see him swift and strong.  
He never shrank from any savage thing  
he'd brought to bay in the deep woods; on the scent  
no other dog kept up with him. Now misery  
35 has him in leash. His owner died abroad,  
and here the women slaves will take no care of him.  
You know how servants are: without a master  
they have no will to labor, or excel.  
For Zeus who views the wide world takes away  
40 half the manhood of a man, that day  
he goes into captivity and slavery.” **F**

Eumaeus crossed the court and went straight forward  
into the mégaron among the suitors;  
but death and darkness in that instant closed  
45 the eyes of Argos, who had seen his master,  
Odysseus, after twenty years. . . .

*Odysseus enters his home as a beggar, and the suitors mock and abuse him.  
Penelope asks to speak with the beggar, but Odysseus puts her off until nightfall.*

**F EPIC**

Reread lines 28–41. Eumaeus still does not know that he is speaking to Odysseus in disguise. This is known as **dramatic irony**—when the reader knows more than a character knows. What event does this speech cause you to anticipate?

**43 mégaron:** the main hall of a palace or house