

Odysseus as Superintendent

by Gary Hardaway

Bandy-legged and barrel-chested,
with a bit of gut above the belt-cinched waist,
bronzed by life under sun
though not Aegean sun,
he oversees the small addition
rising in cinderblock and skeletal steel
outside my office window-
ten auto service bays with heat, no air.
No king of Ithaca, but of each
whining, banging, dust—clouded island
of focused, physical work
responsibility takes him. He pulls a tape
to mark the bearing points of joists.

Not Odysseus. But aren't we all
Odysseus? Self-indulgent, devious
as circumstances warrant, curious,
brave enough to soldier on
through whims of pissy gods and
unexpected weather. And clever, too,
enough to keep the sea
from sucking us down,
always with something like an Ithaca
to rope us back each time
the wine dark waves sing sweetly
of the calm beneath
the troubled surface of the sea.

