

MAN CARRYING “WINNOWING-FAN”

ANDREW OSBORN

[*Od.* 11.119-34]

Something about a junket unto idiom
and the way, when the shouldered oar was no longer

seen as an oar nor reckoned something made
for the sea, when the field hands and maidens at labor

who had never known it, whose landlocked brains
cradled ideas not as an oarlock cradles

the loom to leverage each pull among the waves
but as a cradle rocks a child—when they offered

their loam-dark wine and unsalted bread,
the way they looked at him and what they said.

The infant intuits the sea’s deep rocking,
but she will forget as she wakes and learns

to walk and weave and grows wise to her people’s
indigenous customs. Nor had Odysseus

got a good grasp on the word the blind shade
after lapping the trough of blood sort of whinnied—

this man of the sea
knowing as well a thing or two of horses—

so they asked where he headed at that busy time of harvest
then resumed their *winnowing*, whatever that might be.