

ROGER CALDWELL
OF GODS AND MEN

The Immortals, dwellers on Olympus heights,
pursue their abstruse pleasures—
there's no reason they should pay regard
to toilers in the valley far below.

There humans much preoccupied
with drawing bare subsistence from a stony soil
don't look up often to the mist and clouds
encircling the mountain-top,
but concoct in their imaginations
other deities than those that are.

What, though, if curiosity led,
or an interval from bliss, a god
down to the valley and the world of men?
It's a moot point what good he'd find there—
whether gods should also learn
what mere mortals have to teach.

His godliness would seem just awkward,
be cause for laughter if he hadn't wings
to raise him to the heights again.
The work of humans he'd find hard,
rough to his unpractised hands.

What would he find if he returned?
Would he still have a place among Olympians,
his tongue, once honeyed, stained
with men's words, with their blasphemies,
his divinity in tatters now?
The oracles fell silent, men

doubted of the gods
who'd doubted first of them,
and up the mountain-side
there's such cloud you'll never find a path that's true,
or track of anyone to know
if they aspired, or fell.

As for myself:

you'll find me of an afternoon
drowsing—when I'm able—in an easy-chair,
far from Olympus and the valley now,
resolved to climb no farther up
for fear of falling further down,
not answering to gods or men,
and unwilling to be judged by either.