

Lo, the Gods

Clarence Wolfshoal

Apollo Porta-Pottie

Imagine him stuck in there
on this blistering day—the god
of Light, Sun, and Poetry—
composing lyrics under his laurel crown.
All the stench from bowels
loosened by carnival rides,
beer inspired pee. What's a god
to do? Closed up in a confessional
of waste, he must spout oracles.
He must think of his twin Artemis
afield in the wilderness, beloved
of animals—stern, sweet, chaste sister,
smelling the river rich leaves of cypress.

Zeus Laundry and Dry Cleaning

Would they name a laundry
or even a deli Yahweh's Place?
To this the god has fallen?
What must such a name connote,
lightning bolts shivering the grime
and affrighting the BO? And it's
probably some Hera doing all the work.
She scrubs dirty britches on a wash-
board—rub a dub dub—and presses
starched collars with a coal-fired iron.

Zeus stays out front, feet
up on the counter, and waits
for pretty housewives to drop off a load.

Athena's Escort Service

She has only respectable girls,
co-eds working for their degrees
in philosophy and comparative lit.
Oh, those Platonic dialogues.

She just works the phone—
nowadays e-mail request more
likely—and keeps the books.

Her owl perches on a bust
high on the book shelves, keeps
asking when they're going back
to Athens, but she seems
satisfied to sit and knit, chew
on black olives, and think about
ancient wars.

Venus Adult Book Store

She is amused by the old bald men.
They press against the counter, thumb
through eyefuls of flesh—foreign
countries they yearn to vacation
in but don't know how to buy
a ticket. They take quick peeks
at her breasts and gap-toothed smile.

Eyes dart sideways if she looks
up from counting change. But
mostly she wonders what Mars
is doing out there in the world.
If he'll ever return to make a home

and lose his anger and the red fire
in his still fierce young eyes.

Odin's Optometry

He swivels the keratometer,
tells you to lean into it, look
straight ahead to the horizon
where a green truck fuzzes
along a bumpy road.
Flips of stronger lenses makes
the truck come into focus,
the road become a superhighway,
then a rainbow and the truck
an eight-legged horse
for a second. He jots down
numbers and tells you they'll
be ready next week. He could have
divined the whole problem—a slight
astigmatism—with one eye shut,
but he's part of the economy now.

Thor Studies Studs

Hired out as a framing carpenter,
he'd prefer finishing work, but that hammer
dents the shoe mold. When he tries
to set the nails for a minimum
of painter's putty, he drives the punch
up to the haft. That hammer,
his only possession; swinging it,
his only skill. When he tried
to sell it to a crewmate, the man
couldn't lift it, wanted his money back.
Thor had to agree, more possessed by it
than he was led to believe.