

Jen Webb

From the gods

Here we are again: looking down from the gods
at what's happening on stage. Cast and crew
scurry like ants, pleading in tiny voices
for their lines. The prompt recalls the actors
to the script; the grim director frowns.

'God is a circle whose centre is everywhere'. Then
okay. I claim this spot as centre. I will tint the sky
a fugitive blue, colour the mountains green,
give each street a story
and explain its complex ways.

Give me a fast ride across hard country, past hills
sharp enough to tear out my heart, this
thin green line holds the sea from the shore
it codes the language of gesture, the silence of speech.

A handful of dust, a puff of breath, and voila. No
cheap imports here, I've spun
no straw to gold: what you see is
what you get. Welcome to the world.

'Here we are again' is a catchphrase of the 'king of clowns' Joseph Grimaldi (1778–1837); see Martin Banham, *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). 'The gods' are the cheap seats in the upper balconies of the theatre; 'God is a circle whose centre is everywhere' is from Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* vol.3, trans John Gorton (London: John and Henry Hunt, 1824).