

Donald M. Hassler

Conservative Values from 1859-1860

*Beside a massive gateway built up in years gone by,
Upon whose top the clouds in eternal shadow lie,
While streams the evening sunshine on quiet wood and lea,
I stand and calmly wait till the hinges turn for me.*

William Cullen Bryant, "Waiting by the Gate"

In the year that witty Washington Irving died,
Our feisty liberal editor and poet tried
Another poem to tame that ancient beast
That "Thanatopsis" years before had leashed.

His borrowed topic had bored the ages
Since literature began and priests turned sages
Had hypnotized their audiences to face
What always comes to everyone with calm and grace.

I think that Bryant laboring with Lincoln
To hold together our nation as a beacon
For the world oppressed, also, spoke
With eloquence to those Obama calls ordinary folk.

So as we ponder how to heal our politics,
We ease our bitten bodies with all the tricks
Of rhetoric and lay ourselves quietly to sleep
Not to be unhinged nor to lose faith we need to keep.

Donald M. Hassler received his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1967, taught in Montreal prior to that, and then taught English at Kent State University until retiring in 2014; extrap@Kent.edu. He has published books on Erasmus Darwin, Arthur Machen, and others and has published poems in *Academic Questions*, most recently "Still Life Art," (Winter, 2018). Hassler last contributed to *AQ* in the spring of 2020 with "From Musicology to Cultural History to Politics."

Family Ties and Generation Sonnet

Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir, by his son
(not named but must be Hallam Lord Tennyson),
2 vols. New York, The MacMillan Co, 1899.

To kill some time I bought a book that hid
The author's name within its title well.
Hallam Tennyson, the older son, could not excel
His father though the family never rid
Itself of that noble name. Such sneaky covid
That uses bibliographic lacunae as its tell
To open the profoundly wider puzzle
And helps us probe beneath the mystic lid.

Wherein from loneliness and death we find
The power of generation, become aware
How speciation enfolds a verbal store,
Though hardly peerage, where we also share
Our names. My own first book was thus inscribed for
"My father whose name I sign intentionally as mine."

A Sonnet of Cacophony

Too many voices speak to us at once.
The heights of Babel resonate with rules
So intricate that not our canniest tools
Can translate properly. I am a dunce
Who watches wide-eyed like a bunch
Of wolves, or even patient dogs. The schools
Are shut. Our distancing renders fools
Deplorably alone, one monstrous crunch.

And like Eurydice cannot look back
As we slowly forge our way out of hell.
Our tiny family of mates becomes essential,
Our tribe, our race, our innate potential.
And little acts of kindness mark the track.
And we are blessed again. And all things shall be well.