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Robert Daseler

Yet Another Philosophy of History

The kindled, not yet warming light of dawn
Advances the horizon while revealing
Mountains obscured by night, and if we speak
Of Balder in the north, formerly Ba'al,
It isn't that our minds are held in thrall
By mysteries, but we are most alive
When most perplexed and the obscure becomes
A shape emerging in our memory.

The disambiguation of the runes
Proceeds apace across the signatures
Of centuries, Phoenicians on the shore
Of Scandinavia as gods migrate
Like tourists wearing mail and bearing spears,
Their consonants rebarbative and slurred.
What did they talk about? What beliefs
Prevailed among the mingled deities?

Across the ancient world altars were strewn
As refuges for gods, who dressed as men
And wore hive-shaped helmets and pointed beards.
Elusive figures skirting history
Emerged from desert wastelands, arid hills,
Disappearing into swirling mist.
Thick Cheruscan forests concealed their camps,
Shrouding their ceremonies and their poms.

The tortured signs inscribed on stone conceal
The languages, the secrets, and the minds
Of people who, if we could meet them, might
Resuscitate a lapsed theology.
Thought is a response to what exists
And pushes like a prow through heavy seas
But leaves no furrow in the wave it parts,
The wave itself a sort of memory.

Robert Daseler has been staff writer and editor on three daily newspapers, one each in Connecticut, California, and Texas. Two of his full-length plays have been staged by South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California. The University of Evansville Press has published a collection of his sonnets, *Levering Avenue*.