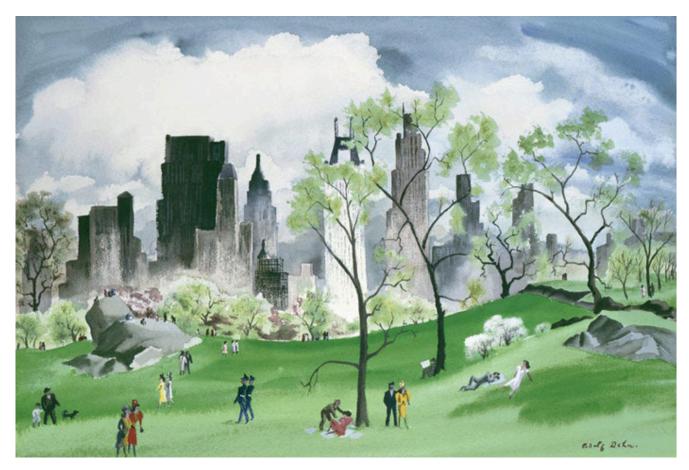
I Wonder What They Pray For

by **Graham Cunningham** (August 2019)



Spring in Central Park, Adolf Dehn, 1941

As I watch them in the park spry old couple, ninety odd hearts re-bored and tooled up with walking, hearing, seeing aids a twinkle even in the eye leaning close, holding hands

these taller, longer-living things our ever-lengthening DNA string she blushes, he grins, I wonder who we must thank?

The gentleman scientist medicine man?

Pioneer, fingering his waistcoat chain

furrowed brow at his flaming hearth

his passion to know the biology that drove

his father to build the family name

and his mother to die giving birth to him.

Or the coming of the public drain?

The engineers who drove it on

dug by expendables who died

in the cause of Health & Safety.

What must they make of Clipboard Man auditing the park?

Access Officer—a safe job checking on the work of trained operatives painting rails in yellow and in black;

he eyes the tree trunks

ponders threats that they might represent

to reckless children playing;

old couples with failing sight.

And if they should trip on broken flags
will they tut and laugh; or
will they be prey to Clipboard Youth
prowling in the park?
"Any injuries or accidents Ma am?"
With his one-day-training, menacing charm
his plastic wallet and his trust-me tag
will they recognise his kind
or has fifty years of filling forms
left their instincts paper-thin?

I wonder what they pray for now their lifetime journey's run from church up aching Sunday hill to a picnic in the park.

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Graham Cunningham is a retired British architect. He is also a writer of occasional essays—and even more occasional poems—on aspects of political correctness and mass media group think. His work has been published in a number of online journals in Britain and the USA.

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