

## Three Snapshots of Superman's Mother

### **Budapest, Hungary. December 1944.**

This stagnant end squats over its vile start

*Faster than a speeding bullet!*

from the slag pile, the louse waste

*More powerful than a locomotive!*

the fecal secretions of war

*Leaps tall buildings in a single bound!*

the girl's father was sought for

*It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Superman!*

the column of Jews being

*Truth, justice and the American Way.*

marched to the river.

*This is a job for Superman.*

It was then that God stole her belief

but left her fraught wonder.

### **Fort Collins, Colorado. November 1963.**

The vertical hold hop-skips,

horses drawing hearses

plod inside the droning box, fusing

to the vitreous reflection

of his mother's tear-streaked face.

Preschool Superman stews.

No president calls Him to Dallas.

He was not consulted

on preempting His TV show for this

dull parade.

His caped powers, though mighty,

are no match for the elegiac bagpipes or

the morose Kennedys on this untuned Magnavox.

**Alexandria, Virginia. April 2016.**

Floating in my feeble galaxy of lost atoms,

I peer at an old picture frame.

Behind glass the girl's silver halide half smile

issues a cautious greeting across

this astronomical distance of longing.

I orbit that smile's twilight glow --

a planet where love has nowhere to go.

## Passover/Easter 2020

Since Eden never such a sanguine night.  
After the slaughter in Goshen of all the flocks,  
their cries abate in the last limb of light.  
Against slave hut doors a blood tide knocks.  
Moses chafes for the risen sun god's eye  
then the furious flight to silent Sinai.

Contagions and devils stalk this spring  
as willets and warblers ring and rage  
over this and that malicious king,  
over these just desserts, that eleventh plague,  
over those years of Egypt grown tired and fat  
and the hungers hunting Judea after that.

Innocence and gospel give turgid explanations  
for each lost child and blood-let lamb.  
Fear lumbers today through divided nations  
and down the snaking streets of tired Jerusalem  
stumbles the risen son, a savior, an enemy  
falling from this weedy Garden of Gethsemane.

## Young Odysseus

You sprang from the old story  
Boys lined along a gully  
Soldiers belting up a gun  
Arguments in a strange tongue  
One saying shoot one not shoot  
Each boy's dream sailing away

Someone was always nosing to know  
Where you were from though long  
from fresh off the boat your patois  
peppered words like wave  
crested crashing long after

Feel my skin wrap over your old ribs  
Drag your battered oars far from sea  
Winnowing fan kindled for heat  
Tread your shadow across the Canadian steppe

Horizon is border of the sailor's knowing  
But a mind is shallow against relentless ocean  
All I think is borne in light breeze  
Carrying this thin vessel to the edge of the world

Thought floats that we are a thing  
that dreams itself invisible  
Sail sloop below horizon  
Boy's body not dropping in red ditch

## Google Earth

Not thick nor lean  
but pliantly lying  
on a polarized screen.  
It lacks a map's crinkle,  
or its volcanic dimples,  
green alpine frock, sweat of ocean.

Swipe right  
for the asphalt assault,  
sharp canines snapping  
at the ribs of gated jungles,  
as the electric sky thunders  
down boundless data.

This wall is woken by  
A flattened paper globe,  
A remnant copy etched  
by an ancient calligrapher  
with a cliff grip  
chiseling a copper plate.

Somewhere Gerardus Mercator  
meets on an equator  
the ragged hunter who first drew  
from warm pitch and raw whisk  
the rugged path she found  
to the grazing grounds.

Their compasses agree:  
on friable parchment  
mapmakers must have  
their maniacal dragons, their  
flawed seas, and their ranges  
of rumpling blunders.

Stumble and rise, stumble and rise,  
on the fraught journey from dot to dot.

## At Your Birth These Hopes Ate My Heart

At your birth these hopes ate my heart.  
Against a fetal monitor's anxious beat of passion  
Your red ear emerged yearning to wander,  
sprouting like a mollusk from a glassy shell,  
arising from a sea floor, alive to the limpid world.

If ever a toddler swaddled the limping world,  
it was you, your lips pursed like a heart  
kissing then pinched to a hermit crab's shell,  
and your faith that your tidal passion  
will wash out grief to find other seas to wander.

Did I think then that you would one day wander  
your way as you choose, spinning the wild world  
into your dreams, throwing your passion  
beyond the farthest territories of your heart,  
kicking out of your cavernous shell?

Then we will mend and refill this shell,  
your fading parents, and wander,  
two shadows cast by one aging heart.  
In a whelk beneath the wobbly world  
We bathe in your conch blast's passion.

I lie awake mulling these days of ill passion,  
prelude to tattering seas and artillery shells,  
or perhaps a broken fever and a patched up world,  
where you can remember me while you wander  
across maps marked by the travels of your heart.

I wish your heart a moment's rest from its passion, a morning  
to wander the beach for shells, at peace in this implausible world.