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Mother Touring Paris, 1946

by Hugh Findlay



She walks smartly
towards the camera,
feet floating,
buoyed by her smile,
in a post-war pocket dress,
petite and self-made,
something akin to
pedestrian chic.

She is well insulated
by her youth,
insinuating herself,
s'il vous plait,
into the bright square
before the Eiffel,
splayed above her
like a crown.

Behind and ignored,
a couple strolls,
peering at the
oddly happy girl,
in that scarred city,
still licking its wounds,
humbled by its
own survival.

Her pose is
staged and fluid,
while her world
encircles only her,
and those in her orbit
claimed by she alone
(even the camera boy,
no doubt, a beau).

What did she teach me
but absolute dismissiveness
for that which displeases—
and to love,
unquestionably,
that grand vision
she anointed herself.

Her truths self-affirmed,
set in stone,
tenets of her newly
adult heart—
all else lies, unless
writ by her holy trinity:
Burns, Shakespeare,
and King James.

All black and white,
those reflections of
the world mood back then,
but necessary somehow,
to make sense
of right and wrong,
ally and enemy,
the resignation of war.

So how could she,
the touring Scot,
check her joie de vivre
long enough to turn and see
in a moment
of reckoning clarity
the tower behind—
gaunt, tilted, faded gray?

Or would she declare
C'est la vie, and march on?

PREVIOUS

[Jigsaw Pieces](#)

NEXT

[Ode to Alice](#)


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