

## HUNG LIU

*Fortune Reader, 2012*  
Oil on Canvas, 59.5 x 48 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

## ROBERT HERSHON

# Billy and Clark

Billy Batson the crippled newsboy  
became Captain Marvel  
simply by saying Shazam!—S for Socrates  
H for Hercules, A for Albert Pujols  
Z for Zero Mostel etc. and that always  
seemed far more efficient than running  
into a phone booth to emerge as Superman  
Besides, there aren't any phone booths left  
no place to leave all those green suits  
Goodwill probably has rack after rack  
of barely worn green suits but no takers

On the other hand  
there are no more newsboys either  
like the one in San Francisco who was shouting  
The body's been found! The body's been found!  
What body? my friend asked  
*Anybody*, wise guy. The body's been found!

Superman and Batman and various clans of  
specialized talents who can turn themselves into  
fire or mercury or strawberry jam are still with us  
avenging whatever the hell they need to avenge  
but Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel and Captain Marvel  
Junior are long gone, not killed by grizzled bad guys  
but condemned by the courts which declared that the  
Captain was a ripoff of Superman's copyright  
and could no longer go streaking  
across the skies in his orange costume

Actually they've been living in my basement  
all these years, afraid to go out lest they be  
zapped by the law. I join them from time to time  
and we cower together around the old furnace  
Billy Batson occasionally reappears but it's hard  
to stand on the corner hawking CNN and Fox News.

Everybody's already heard all the news,  
all of it, all the news

**Robert Hershon's** fourteenth book, *Freeze Frame*, is due this fall from Pressed Wafer. His most recent collection, *Goldfish and Rose*, came out in 2013. Hershon's work has appeared in *The Nation*, *Poetry 180*, *Vanitas*, and many other magazines and anthologies. He has won two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and three from the New York Foundation for the Arts. He has been co-editor of Hanging Loose Press since 1966.