

# Three Poems

Cynthia Hogue

instead, it is dark

(1944/2018)

I woke to the dead  
and was among them.

how this happened,  
who did this to us

unaccountably  
hatred glosses

and evidence belies.  
*ourselves* but ourselves.

I'd gone to the corner  
when the bakery opened,

mouthed regards  
to a rare sun, then suddenly –

though not – I remember  
nothing else.

I feel around me now  
and everyone's near

who waited for bread  
or God one morning.

it's true I thought at the last  
I heard something but didn't think

to turn, nor catch sight of,  
nor glean time to.

## The Father

It's true he kicked the boy when  
he was too squeamish to hook a worm  
but not very hard.

He might have launched his son  
into the water though the father planted  
the kick on impulse,

it meant nothing  
but *I am the ruler of your  
world. Swiftly executed.*

The boy, who hadn't expected it  
nevertheless knew his father and  
kicked himself for standing too close.

*I'm so stupid*, he thought,  
which he said aloud as tonight  
after dinner the story –

so long at the bottom of memory's lake –  
surfaced, bloated, eyes eaten away,  
the thing he'd hooked at last.

The man held up the catch, seeing how  
small the tyrant had been, cowed  
into outbursts since the Liberation,

a passivist saying when asked,  
*No, we were not touched  
by the war. We were not curious.*

Surviving, his father found kindness  
sheened with cruelty like armor,  
which is what sank, rusted away.

## After the War There Was Another War

The man's cousin, six years older when drafted  
to Algeria, *saw things*, they said,  
the war being fought by then *with gloves off*.

How history's  
trace resides in a country's language.  
fifty years later, the cousin gasping for breath,

the man understood that all the white  
wine, harsh and constant cigarettes  
were also a language,

that his cousin's other-  
worldly laughter welled from an ancient memory  
of having once *belly* laughed.

*Like riding a bike*, they said. Time heals  
nothing. Defeated, the colonizers created  
for their children a doctored history.  
When conscripted, the man whiled his time  
cleaning the rifle he still keeps in the upper closet,  
oiled and ready.

"instead, it is dark," "The Father," and "After The War There Was Another War," from *instead, it is dark* by  
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**Cynthia Hogue's** tenth poetry collection is *instead, it is dark* (Red Hen Press, 2023). Her ekphrastic Covid chapbook is entitled *Contain* (Tram Editions 2022), and her third collaborative translation from the French of Nicole Brossard is *Distantly* (Omnidawn 2022). She served as the second Director of the Stadler Center for Poetry at Bucknell University from 1995-2003. There, she trained in Conflict Resolution with the Mennonites, earning her certificate in conflict mediation. Among her honors are a Fulbright Fellowship to Iceland, two NEA Fellowships, and the Harold Morton Landon Translation Award from the Academy of American Poets. She served as Guest Editor for Poem-a-Day for September (2022), sponsored by the Academy of American Poets. Hogue was the inaugural Maxine and Jonathan Marshall Chair in Modern and Contemporary Poetry at Arizona State University. She lives in Tucson. Her website is: <https://cynthiahogue.com/>.