

Anno Domini MMXXI

ELLEN HINSEY

*By a secret oath ...to keep forever the power
they had acquired.*

Livy

For Timothy Snyder

Later, my historian, dutifully inscribe in the stony
annals: those years, men gathered in shadowy councils
amongst themselves.

It will be refuted they had a mandate: but from the
lamenting mouths of the ancient urns will come the
assent—they did.

It will be remembered how they first emptied the
granite squares—then swung wide the city gates for
those rough bands who always wait at logic's outskirts.

How they made a fool of the laws: how in the senate,
with garlands on their heads, they gave false
witness—but the others, as if entranced, forbore rising
up against them.

Remember also to inscribe how in summer—the fierce heat was upon them.

How under the vast, oracular sky, they watched as innocents were taken from oaken carts, the young forever separated from their elders.

How a silent purge began. How doubt decimated the already dry fields.

It will be said, later, that some desired to speak out: but fearful, they will claim their mouths were already sealed with the frozen wax of alarm.

Yet others will whisper: remember, for a time, this was not the case.

It was only at the end that the marble statues were silenced with blood.

Above all, my historian, this time—do not say there were no witnesses. There were many witnesses.

About the Author

Ellen Hinsey is the author of nine books of poetry, essays, dialogue and literary translation. Her most recent volume of poetry, *The Illegal Age*, which explores the rise of authoritarianism, was chosen as UK's Poetry Book Society's fall 2018 Choice. Hinsey's essays on democracy in Central and Eastern Europe are collected in *Mastering the Past: Reports from Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* (Telos Press, 2017). Her book-length dialogue with Lithuanian poet and dissident Tomas Venclova, *Magnetic North*, explores post-war culture and ethics under totalitarianism and was finalist for Lithuania's Book of the Year. Hinsey's other volumes of poetry include, *Update on the Descent*, which draws on her experience at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague, *The White Fire of Time* and *Cities of Memory*, which received the Yale Series in poetry Award. Her work has appeared in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Irish Times*, *Der Tagesspiegel*, *Poetry* and many others. She has received numerous awards and is currently a visiting professor at the University of Göttingen.

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