

Trauma, Self and Memory in the World War II Poems by Richard Hugo

Jiří Flajšar

Palacký University, Olomouc

Abstract

The article provides a fresh reading of the war poems by Richard Hugo. His reputation as a poet of lonely American landscapes has caused his readers to ignore his war trauma poems. These poems, written over his entire career, make him an important, if hitherto unrecognized, American chronicler of World War II and its psychological impact upon the sensibility of the lyric poet.

Keywords: Richard Hugo, American poetry, war, regionalist, confessional, trauma, self, memory, landscape

Richard Hugo (1923–1982) is a major American regionalist poet of the 1960s–1970s. His lyric poetry in the confessional mode typically negotiates the relationship between the inner self and outer landscapes of the Pacific Northwest. Hugo's landscape poems resemble Wordsworthian pieces that humanize the bleak essence of individual memory into a shared moment of identification, enabling the reader to experience "a place of warmth where there had been only hardness" (Garber 236). This article focuses on the representation of war, trauma, and memory in Hugo's lyric poetry. There are many powerful poems that may be examined from this perspective, as memories of war-induced trauma are represented throughout Hugo's oeuvre from his first volume of poetry to his last – that is, from *A Run of Jacks* (1961) to *White Center* (1980).¹

Hugo's most war-based book is, however, his third volume of poetry, *Good Luck in Cracked Italian* (1969). The poems in the volume transcend the formulaic style of what Robert von Hallberg calls "tourist poems," that is, poems motivated mostly by the superficial desire of the poet to describe a foreign, exotic place as an end in itself that might sustain the poem's reason for being (von Hallberg 64–5). When one ignores the foreign

setting, such a tourist poem becomes a mere exploration of a personal story embellished with exotic detail. Unlike his more cosmopolitan American poet contemporaries James Merrill, Richard Wilbur, Adrienne Rich, and Anthony Hecht, who all wrote notable tourist poems set in traditional European cultures, Hugo's poetry set in foreign places is not written to show off the poet's knowledge of tourist sights. He uses Italy, Yugoslavia, and the Isle of Skye as three notable non-American settings in numerous poems whereby he projects the self onto the outer landscape. As William V. Davis explains, the phenomenon of travel in Hugo's poetry is "an interior or imaginative journey, a matter of mind caught in a new, or newly different, landscape, with new sights to see, new people to meet, new things to do" (58). However, travel poetry also reinforces old dogmas, memories, and traumatic experiences that are related to familiar as well as strange landscapes. As a poet, Hugo avoids using foreign European locations, sights, and landscapes as vehicles for the American writer to achieve cultural hegemony. Instead, his strategy is what Dave Smith calls "the quest for self and the quest for home" (282). The redeeming effect of such poetry lies precisely in the reader's ability to empathize with Hugo's habitual "confrontation of a man with an inevitable fate: he must survive by finding a way home and he will always fail in his attempts" (Smith 277).

In 1944–5, Hugo served in the U.S. Army as a bombardier and flew 35 missions with the B-24 Liberator heavy bomber plane. Some of these World War II missions were close calls, and there was even a mission in which Hugo's plane crashed, with no fatalities.² The missions included high-altitude bombings of targets in Yugoslavia and central Europe, especially Austria and Hungary.³ While stationed near the town of Cerignola in southern Italy, Hugo had to battle off-duty anxiety and nightmares which started halfway through his mission history, when he realized that he could be killed at any time. Following this insight, he started having nightmares about dying in action, accompanied by physiological symptoms of sickness. From this point, "things were never the same" as "it wasn't the reality of war alone but what your imagination did with it" (Hugo, *The Real West Marginal Way* 99).

In *Among the Nightmare Fighters*, Diederik Oostdijk argues that any realist response by poets to the traumas of their World War II experience was difficult to communicate to the American public. First, "the poets of the era would rather have been silent about their experiences, in part because the events they witnessed or heard about were too devastating to capture in words. Yet they nevertheless were compelled to write about them" (Oostdijk 2). Another reason why the exploration of World War II in American poetry seems under-represented in public memory is caused by the fact that the poems of World War II often go against the dominant pattern of celebrating the glorious victory of the masculine victors, giving instead "voice to the ordinarily inconspicuous victims that war created" (Oostdijk 241). The World War II victims, or witnesses, by virtue of suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, would include the American World War II soldier-poets themselves, of which Hugo seems a good example. Oostdijk notes a discrepancy between the reality of World War II as a traumatic experience and the way it was later portrayed by American poets in their poems: "While there are many poems by the poets of World War II that hint at the traumatic effect of war, there are only half a dozen that concentrate on trauma or that openly acknowledge how trauma affects the soldier's life after the war" (193). Still, many

of the American poets who took part in World War II “experienced serious psychological problems when they returned home” (193).

If the war had a negative effect upon the mental health and subsequent civilian careers of many poets, it allowed them to explore their war experience with unprecedented formal and linguistic ingenuity. Margot Norris describes the response of American poets to World War II as immensely varied, representing “virtually every innovation produced in the immense range of Anglo-American modernism, from local specificity and realism to classical allusion and referential obliquity, from the primness of regular meter and rhyme to the idiom of slang and the vernacular of obscenity” (44). A comparable amount of thematic and formal diversity is to be found in the selection of war poems by Richard Hugo alone, including his postwar poems about revisiting the sites of traumatic war experiences.

Hugo developed early his style of landscape poems which use short, Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, occasional cryptic condensation, and metaphoric phrasing in a quasi-regular rhythm. Such a style is reminiscent of William Wordsworth, Thomas Hardy, William Butler Yeats, Theodore Roethke, and James Wright, all of whom inspired Hugo to explore the relationship between the inner and outer landscape. Yet, an early major war poem by Hugo, “Mission to Linz,” seems more important for the novelty of its subject than for its use of form and language. It describes the impact of a bombing mission upon the mind of a bomber crew member. The poem is cast in unmetred stanzas and uses a quiet meditative tone that reflects the somber, monotonous atmosphere of a mission that goes well. In the poem’s four parts, Hugo explores the sensory perceptions aboard the bomber, and the symbolism of north and south. North is presented as the direction of the US bombers’ mission, where the sky “ends / as if finite or breaks its northern orange, in a vacuum of time” (*Making Certain* 79). The mission is portrayed as uneventful, in subdued tones, the sound of the engines “has a silence of its own” (80), and time has been suspended as the high altitude “air / is ten centuries of waiting” (81). In the fourth, final section of the poem, the return part of the mission is portrayed as a move back toward life, epitomized by the vivacity of the Italian base in the south, “where the sound is / always summer” (80) and “where concerts carry / fast in summer wind” (81). James Wright highlights the importance of “Mission to Linz” as a “secret account of the spiritual life” of the poet whose song is one of celebration, of joy at having survived one more brush with death (Wright 13).

Perhaps the most dramatic of all Hugo’s air force poems is “Where We Crashed,” in which the poet presents a stream-of-consciousness account of a plane crash in very short lines. Margot Norris argues that these bear an uncanny resemblance to “a rapid vertical descent” of a plane that had just been shot down (Norris 46):

I was calling airspeed
christ
one-thirty-five and
pancake bam
glass going first
breaking slow
slow dream
breaking
slow

sliding
gas and bombs
sliding
you end
now
here

(*Making Certain* 121)

The feverish sequence of short, machine-gun-like phrasing develops into a string of expletives as the plane fall becomes hopeless (“hole open / out / sweet / cheese-eating / jesus / out / clumsy / nothing / fuckass / nothing / shithead / nothing”). The plane fall comes to a halt and a suspicious farmer runs up to the wreck, “screaming / something / someone / .45 / shoot / get back / shoot him” (123) as the crew, having miraculously survived the crash, tries to save themselves, running “all away / from gas / from bombs, ” with a final affirmation of life, “I didn’t die” (124). The trauma of the plane crash and the effect of survival is used in order to have a therapeutic effect upon the survivor poet. Yet as Stanislav Kolář explains, writing about war-induced trauma is problematic since the traumatic event being portrayed “is never fully experienced as it really occurred, even when the reenactment of the traumatic situation is largely accurate” (Kolář 9). A similar, near-fatal crash that Hugo and his crew indeed survived is mentioned by the poet in an autobiographical essay, and Hugo’s laconic mention of the event downplays the real drama involved: “We had crashed only a week before – miraculously the full load of gas and bombs hadn’t ignited” (*The Real West Marginal Way* 124). Before Hugo realized the omnipresence of death and danger in bombing raids, he had shared the youthful ignorance of the consequences of his actions: “We were not bombing people. Towns looked as real as maps. Bomb impacts were minute puffs of silent smoke” (*The Real West Marginal Way* 98).

If “Where We Crashed” feels so intense and traumatic that the event portrayed almost resists representation, other, less dramatic war memories would be explored by Hugo with more eloquence. For example, the poet recalls a particular moment of a minor breakdown that had little to do with the war itself. Being off-duty, Hugo chose to hitchhike through the Italian countryside to see an American friend. On his way back to the base, Hugo got lost near a town called Spinazzola. Having failed to thumb a ride from the malevolent drivers of the passing stream of army trucks, he tried to find his way on foot, and, having failed to do so, kept on walking into the open countryside until he broke down and felt a curious release of tension while time was suspended:

After I’d walked for well over an hour, I sat down to rest by a field of grass. I was tired, dreamy, the way we get without enough sleep, and I watched the wind move in waves of light across the grass. The field slanted and the wind moved uphill across it, wave after wave. The music and motion hypnotized me. The longer the grasses moved, the more passive I became. Had I walked this road when I was a child? Something seemed familiar. I didn’t care about getting back to the base now. I didn’t care about the war. I was not a part of it anymore. (*The Real West Marginal Way* 114)

This is the prose account of a traumatic memory, inexplicable for the writer, yet haunting and important as it was one of the defining moments of Hugo’s war experience. Kolář

explains the relevance of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a term for a typical human reaction to a “stressful situation in which an individual is exposed to a traumatic event which results in a breach of his or her integrity” (7). In Hugo’s case, the inexplicable breakdown in an Italian field of grass became so important that he chose to explore it no less than three times, once in the above-quoted essay, and twice in the form of a poem. The early poetic representation is “Centuries Near Spinnazola” [sic], beginning with a condensed description of the breakdown:

This is where the day went slack.
It could have been digestion or the line
of elms, the wind relaxed and flowing
and the sea gone out of sight.
This is where the day and I surrendered
as if the air
were suddenly my paramour.⁴

(Making Certain 29)

The progression of time is suspended (“the day went slack”); the duration of the moment of the collapse is expanded to last for “Centuries,” as the poem’s title suggests. Hugo describes a situation in which the protagonist deviates from the heroic archetype of the American soldier. The reason for the breakdown seems at once profound, mysterious, and inexplicable. The speaker feels liberated from his military duties (such as having to return promptly, and to report at the base in order to fly more deadly missions as ordered), and in his relinquishment of social obligations he finds himself beyond the stress induced by his service with the air force.

The following stanza contains a trademark Hugo phrase in which he complains that the field “is far from any home” (29). Having given in to the stress of losing his way in the unforgiving environment of wartime Italy, the vision of one’s homecoming becomes a surrogate ambition. The description of the paralysis of the speaker is followed by a homely image of a distant farm, “tiny from a dead ten miles / of prairie” and the faint noise of Hugo’s imagined comrades in the air flying overhead as he “stood on grass / and saw the bombers cluster, / and drone the feeble purpose of a giant” (29). The third stanza introduces a strategy used by many other American World War II poets, from Hugo to Ciardi and Nemerov, who chose to “refer to earlier wars or make intertextual allusions to war poems by poets of previous generations” (Oostdijk 17). Hugo moves back to the glories of early Mediterranean military history in order to juxtapose it with his own sense of inferiority: “Men rehearsed terror at Sardis / and Xerxes beat the sea” (*Making Certain 29*). The allusions to a great city and warriors of antiquity contrast with the anti-heroic present of the poet’s WW II breakdown. In the next stanza, Hugo elaborates the projection of the self as an ancient, timeless warrior whose moment of breakdown in the field is expanded to last several millennia, reaching as far back as the age of the domestication of animals:

And prior to the first domestic dog,
a king of marble, copper gods,
I must have stood like that and heard
the cars roar down the road,

the ammo wagon and the truck,
must have turned my back on them
to see the stroke of grass on grass
on grass across the miles of roll,
the travel of my fever now, my urge
to hurt or love released and flowing.

(*Making Certain* 29)

The ambivalent mix of emotions, (“my urge / to hurt or love”) heals the speaker of the stress and nightmare visions, if only for the duration of the moment, as he becomes hypnotized by the patterns of the wind-shaped grass. The moment of the realization of the self as breaking free of all social duties shares many qualities with what M. H. Abrams calls “the Romantic moment,” that is, “a deeply significant experience in which an instant of consciousness, or else an ordinary object or event, suddenly blazes into revelation; the unsustainable moment seems to arrest what is passing, and is often described as an intersection of eternity with time” (385). Yet one should note the difference between this and the Wordsworthian “spot of time” and its “vivifying virtue”; Hugo’s moment of breakdown is not a positive, triumphant revelation, but rather a painful time in which one tries to come to terms with trauma, nightmares, and social inadequacy.

Hugo revisited the Spinazzola incident in a later poem, “*Spinazzola: Quella Cantina Là*” (*Making Certain* 124–6). The dominant tone of the piece is nostalgia and inarticulation. After some twenty years, Hugo tries to re-create and localize the exact war-time “field of wind” which earlier “gave license for defeat” (124). The search for the place is tempered with the wine that the poet and his wife consume during their 1960s visit to Italy. A local cantina symbolizes traditional Italian hospitality which helps the poet to free himself of his war demons: “and the field I’m sure / is in this wine or that man’s voice. The man / and his canteen were also here / twenty years ago and just as old” (124). The frame of the poem is its “I can’t explain” chorus line, which helps Hugo to portray the inarticulation when it comes down to understanding subconscious fears. Yet the admission of ignorance about the motives for a return visit does not preclude the poem from providing a therapeutic answer to the question of why should Hugo come back at all: “I can’t explain. The grass bent. The wind / seemed full of men but without hate or fame” (*Making Certain* 124). Another attempt to explain the Italian search appears in the second stanza: “Here, by accident, / the wrong truck, I came back to the world” (124). The poet admits ignorance about the purpose of his return visit—the impulse to return to Italy in the 1960s seems inexplicable unless, as Hugo says in his essay about the experience, a lack of understanding of one’s motives for revisiting the places of past trauma may really mean the undertaking is an end in itself: “I still wasn’t sure why I’d come back, but I felt it must be the best reason in the world” (*The Real West Marginal Way* 129). As William Davis explains, Hugo “keeps saying, explaining ‘I can’t explain,’ and yet he knows, and now knows he knew then” (66). Hugo’s strategy of presenting his motives for coming back to Italy as inexplicable is really another version of the poet’s favourite obsession with the homecoming journey that feeds and fosters his imagination, making “that foreign place a ‘home’, a place one could, or must, return to” (Davis 66).

It seems “*Spinazzola: Quella Cantina Là*” is a more complex and rewarding postwar trauma poem than “*Centuries Near Spinnazola*.” Hugo succeeds, not in explaining the reason for his second visit to the field, but in showing the way an artist works. Donna Gerstenberger explains the strategy behind the Italy-based poems, describing them as exercises in poetic psychotherapy in which Hugo “is forced to face two worlds at once, the traumatic past he remembers so vividly and the present which has changed so greatly after only twenty years” (22). Hugo himself admits that during his return in the 1960s, he wanted to find a “gray and lifeless Italy” which he knew in 1944, but found, instead, a vibrant country that was “filled with sparkling fountains, shiny little cars that honked and darted through well-kept streets, energetic young men and beautiful well-dressed young women” (*The Real West* 107).

Hugo would also treat the subject of his wartime military service with humorous irreverence. “*In Your War Dream*” is a late poem in the form of a joke, wherein all of Hugo’s wartime fears are re-enacted as a Sisyphean cycle of eternal punishment. Within the chain of absurd events, the individual is left with no choice but to relive past nightmares:

You must fly your 35 missions again.
 The old base is reopened. The food is still bad.
 You are disturbed. The phlegm you choked up
 mornings in fear returns. You strangle on the phlegm.
 You ask, “Why must I do this again?” A man
 replies, “Home.”

(*Making Certain* 281)

At the end of the poem, the speaker is ordered to return to the base, only to be forced to fly his quota of 35 more missions. The inexorable repetition of the war service trauma lacks any therapeutic effect (unlike the effect of the two *Spinazzola* poems) – the poet is doomed to relive his fears for eternity; with no explanation given, he has to submit to the rules of combat duty presented as absurdist farce.

Another dominant tone in Hugo’s World War II poems is that of survivor guilt. In “*Letter to Simic from Boulder*,” Hugo introduces the guilty bombardier. The poem was prompted by Hugo having met Charles Simic, a fellow poet who lived in Belgrade as a youngster during the war: “And so we meet once in San Francisco and I / learn I bombed you long ago in Belgrade when you were five. / I remember” (*Making Certain* 279). Oostdijk explains that this epistolary poem by Hugo serves to change the poet’s perspective of war from that of an individual soldier’s quest for survival to a more human realization of the moral impact of bombing (181). Using Simic in the role of the sympathetic listener, Hugo tries to explain his naive youthful motives for taking part in the air raids: “I was / willingly confused by the times. I think I even believed in heroics (for others, not for me)” (*Making Certain* 279). The gesture of reaching out to Simic, asking for forgiveness, seems empty until one realizes that regret with a touch of self-deprecation is all that the poet’s tortured self can muster: “Next time, if you want to be sure / you survive, sit on the bridge I’m trying to hit and wave” (280). Humour alleviates the poet’s embarrassment at having met a survivor of his WWII bombing.⁵ The real American bombs, by the end of the Simic poem, have been reduced to “candy” and the bombardier poet claims to have “lost the lead

plane” in an effort to wax satirical about the effect of any future meeting of the two poets (280).

The guilty bomber attitude is used by Hugo also in other poems. In “The Yards of Sarajevo,” he visits the historical metropolis of Bosnia, whose private importance for Hugo is, as in the case of Belgrade, its WW II status of a target of bombing missions: “These people, tracks and cars were what / we came to bomb nineteen years ago / and missed six miles through blinding clouds” (*Making Certain* 127). In the second stanza, Hugo alludes to the 1914 shooting of the Austrian archduke in Sarajevo, which triggered the Great War in 1914 (“One war started here”). Again, the urge to get to know the site of a 1940s bombing mission haunts the poet into visiting the place in the 1960s, yet the effect is one of embarrassment at meeting former victims or their descendants: “I was five miles up there sighting / on this spot” (127). The realization that Hugo has more in common with the bombed people of Sarajevo than a war mission participant would have dared to think is evident:

Even long wars end. Dukes and Kings
tell peasants old jokes underground.
This was small and foreign five miles down.
Why am I at home? The tongue is odd,
the station loud. All rebuilt
and modern. Only the lighting bad.
(*Making Certain* 127)

Hugo projects compassion onto a former enemy city and landscape, finding its atmosphere corresponds to the familiar bleakness of his favourite deserted places in the Pacific Northwest. In “Galleria Umberto I,” Hugo plays around with his surprise at the way the iconic shopping gallery in Naples has changed, from WW II shabbiness to 1960s glamour: “I remember it a little more forlorn” (129). Yet the main importance of the poem is not in the first two stanzas which describe the Galleria of now, but in the final two sections, which contain Hugo’s meditation on guilt and suffering. First, Hugo denies his war involvement (“I’m not myself. I didn’t do these things.”). In the final stanza, however, he breaks down and the admission of guilt is the gesture available: “I did lots of things and I’m myself / to live with, bad as any German” (130). In the poem’s closure, Hugo admits that the war hero persona was never his forte:

How could this poem
with no tough man behind it, come to me
today, walking where I walked
twenty years ago amazed, when now
no one is hungry, the gold facade is polished
and they have no word in dialect for lonely?
(*Making Certain* 130)

By Hugo’s admission, there is a perverse side to the poetic appropriation of places, landscapes, and people’s lives and to the subsequent wish to keep all of these gray, sad, and desolate, in order to reflect the poet’s vision of the world as lonely, decaying, and haunted: “I fell in love with a sad land [of World War II Italy], and I wanted it sad one more time”

(*The Real West* 107). Yet these Hugo poems do not simply dramatize survivor guilt. As James Wright argues, they are poems of discovery (Wright 13). What gets discovered is the essential Hugo theme – an exploration of the “wild secrets of the inner landscape,” the poet’s obsessions and nightmares, a strategy present in his landscape poems as well as in the postwar Italian poems, studying “the inner face” of things as they are, “the face we are all dying to share in a century when in our terror we have all been running to hide, only to discover our places in the other place, our secrets in the other secret” (Wright 13).

In “South Italy, Remote and Stone,” Hugo says a final word on the virtue of having one’s war trauma metamorphosed into a shared aesthetic experience of belonging to a place and community:

I’ll never be home except here, dirt poor
 in abandoned country. My enemy, wind,
 helps me hack each morning again at the rock.
 (*Making Certain* 147)

In the poetic metamorphosis of his 1960s trips to the Mediterranean, Hugo re-enacts his suffering to pose as a victim of traumatic memories and, having established this stance, he hopes to be rid of guilt for his war actions. As Richard Howard notes, “the conventions of a place have given [Hugo] a vocabulary in which to accommodate his action in whatever place it occurs” (284). In the best of his wartime and postwar European travel poems (which have been discussed above), Hugo makes alive what Michael Dobberstein describes as “the tension between place and self”, whose portrayal is, in a way, a celebration of “a peculiarly American way of being, a phenomenology of failure, degradation, and loss” (425). If Hugo’s poetry does not adhere to the paradigm that equates American war literature with masculine posturing and glorious victory (Oostdijk 5), its charm rests in the moving portrait of the persona whose breakdowns and failures make “our lives matter whether we like it or not” (Wright 13).

In “White Center,” an unrelated late poem about coming to terms with an unhappy adolescence in a poor suburb of Seattle, Hugo speaks of his effort to rid himself of a family-induced trauma (“I hoped for forty years / I’d write and would not write this poem”, *Making Certain* 375). Addressing the ghost of his domineering grandmother, the poet finds the confident voice of a survivor, giving him the peace of mind and maturity which was denied to the author of the war poems:

...I walk this past with you, ghost in any field
 of good crops, certain I remember everything wrong.
 If not, why is this road lined thick with fern
 and why do I feel no shame kicking the loose gravel home?
 (*Making Certain* 375)

Jonathan Holden traces the development of Hugo’s persona back to the personal voice of Wordsworth’s *Prelude* and Whitman’s *Song of Myself*, for, in the best of Hugo’s poems, “the isolate self, in an irredeemably secular world, lacking recourse to the easy extrinsic authority of priest or psychiatrist, must rely on its own ingenuity to stay sane – must again and again impose some story, some little summarizing song, a brief order of imagination

upon a bleak reality” (181). The landscape, then, is not merely a projection of the wounded self of the poet; rather, it is a metaphoric confirmation of it (Holden ix). Given Hugo’s lifelong aversion to faith, he logically seeks redemption in the act of inventing poems that reach out to others, friends and strangers alike. Whenever he travels, from the Pacific coast to Italy, Yugoslavia and beyond, he takes the reader on a journey racked with self-doubt, sharing a private geography of desolate places and lonely people that feed his imagination and help release his guilt through poetic utterance. Ultimately, deliverance is found by Hugo in the act of singing his personal, painful, troubled landscape song.

Notes

¹ This overview takes into accounts the books published in Hugo’s lifetime. A posthumous collection of Hugo’s collected poems, *Making Certain It Goes On* (1984), would bring no additional war poems and no additional poems on his experience of revisiting Italy.

² On the representation of the plane crash as an ultimate traumatic experience, see my discussion of Hugo’s poem “Where We Crashed” below.

³ For a detailed account of Hugo’s war experience, see the “*Catch 22*, Addendum” (95–105) and “*Ci Vediamo*” (106–29) chapters of *The Real West Marginal Way: A Poet’s Autobiography*. Ed. Ripley S. Hugo, Lois M. Welch and James Welch (New York: Norton, 1986). In the first of these, Hugo compares and contrasts the credibility of Heller’s great war novel, *Catch-22*, with his own bombardier experience. In the second chapter, he provides a memoir of his 1960s return trips to Italy where he hoped to settle his war accounts and visit places of great psychological value to him.

⁴ All poems by Hugo that are quoted in this article are taken from the definitive posthumous poetry volume, *Making Certain It Goes On: The Collected Poems of Richard Hugo* (New York: Norton, 1984). The spelling of the town, Spinazzola, is incorrect in “Centuries near Spinnazzola,” as Hugo himself later admitted (see *The Real West Marginal Way*, 115). The piece first appeared in Hugo’s first volume of poetry, *A Run of Jacks* (1961), where it stands out among numerous poems devoted to his favourite themes of making alive the Pacific Northwest’s small towns, places, fishing haunts, and deserted landscapes.

⁵ In most of Hugo’s best-known poems, including “Lady in Kicking Horse Reservoir,” “Degrees of Gray in Philipsburg,” and “White Center,” the “you” that the speaker addresses is either dead or cast as the generic reader/receptor of the poet’s appeal.

Bibliography

- Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*. New York: Norton, 1971.
- Davis, William V. “‘Good Luck in Cracked Italian’: Richard Hugo in Italy.” *War, Literature & the Arts: International Journal of the Humanities* 20.1–2 (2008): 57–73.

- Dobbenstein, Michael. "Rediscovering Richard Hugo: Reading the Poems." *Midwest Quarterly* 49.4 (2008): 416–30.
- Garber, Frederick. "Fat Man At The Margin: The Poetry of Richard Hugo." Myers, 223–36.
- Gerstenberger, Donna. *Richard Hugo*. Boise, ID: Boise State University, 1983.
- Hallberg, Robert von. *American Poetry and Culture, 1945–1980*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Holden, Jonathan. *Landscapes of the Self: The Development of Richard Hugo's Poetry*. Millwood, NY: AFP, 1986.
- Howard, Richard. *Alone with America: Essays on the Art of Poetry in the United States Since 1950*. Enlarged Edition. New York: Atheneum, 1980.
- Hugo, Richard. *Making Certain It Goes On: The Collected Poems of Richard Hugo*. New York: Norton, 1984.
- . *The Real West Marginal Way: A Poet's Autobiography*. Ed. Ripley S. Hugo, Lois M. Welch and James Welch. New York: Norton, 1986.
- Kolář, Stanislav. "Introduction." Kolář et al., 5–17.
- Kolář, Stanislav, Zuzana Buráková, and Katarína Šandorová. *Reflections of Trauma in Selected Works of Postwar American and British Literature*. Košice: Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, 2010.
- Myers, Jack, ed. *A Trout in the Milk: A Composite Portrait of Richard Hugo*. Lewiston, ID: Confluence, 1982.
- Norris, Margot. "War Poetry in the USA." *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of World War II*. Ed. Marina MacKay. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 43–55.
- Oostdijk, Diederik. *Among the Nightmare Fighters: American Poets of World War II*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2011.
- Smith, Dave. "Getting Right: Richard Hugo's Selected Poems." Myers, 275–90.
- Wright, James. "Hugo: Secrets of the Inner Landscape." *American Poetry Review* 2.3 (1973): 13.

Address:
Palacký University
Faculty of Arts
Department of English and American Studies
Křížkovského 10
771 80 Olomouc
jiri.flajsar@upol.cz