

The War in the Air: Post-War Memory in the Poetry of Howard Nemerov and Richard Hugo

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He watched the sky and thought of all the fires the world had ever seen, fires from wars, fires from bombs. So much smoke. Where has it all gone? New smoke curled beneath wisps of old, drifting ever higher, higher. Where does it all go? He inhaled deeply and his insides burned, and Vernon knew all that smoke was now just the air we breathe.

—Alan Heathcock, "Smoke," *Volt: Stories*

The title "The War in the Air" comes from Howard Nemerov's 1977 poem of the same name, and this paper focuses on the pervasiveness of war memory in the poetry of two members of the U.S. Army Air Forces who served in World War II, Howard Nemerov and Richard Hugo. Neither Nemerov nor Hugo began publishing poetry until after the conclusion of their armed service, and the war did not feature as a prominent topic until later in their writing careers. For Hugo, 24 years had passed since the war before his 1969 collection *Good Luck In Cracked Italian* was published, poems in which Hugo negotiates his memories of the war with a return visit to the sites of the Mediterranean theater where he flew combat missions for the 825th Squadron. Though Nemerov had written poems on subjects such as service, suffering, and the universality of war in each of his poetry collections, it wasn't until 1987's *War Stories* that a collection of his was thematically driven by both war experience and contemplation of the impulses that return humans to war. In contrast to the intensity and horror conveyed in the trench poetry of First World War British soldiers Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, the feelings of anger, futility, and resignation in the delayed war poems of Howard

Nemerov and Richard Hugo suggest the permanence of war memory in the post-war consciousness.

Many soldiers have struggled with the legacy of the wars they fought and their role in relation to the entirety of the conflict. Well documented is the historical commonality of soldier's not discussing the war upon returning home, and this repression of experience sharing is one contributing factor to the mythologizing of World War II as "the good war." Studs Terkel popularized the notion that World War II was a "good war," a title given in relation to the First World War's reputation as "The Great War" due to its grandiosity (Terkel). The moral implication that World War II was the "good war" comes from the common understanding that it was a war that needed to be fought to defeat fascism in Europe and defend the millions demonized by the Nazi regime. When reflecting on the American perspective of World War II, the nicknames "the good war" and "the greatest generation" for those who served in World War II are part of a war mythology that has been gradually accepted as fact rather than moral posturing. Challenging the historical memory of World War II, Michael C. C. Adams argues that although there are tangible truths to these positive assessments of the 1940s and American military might, the complexity of the era is distorted through acts of nostalgia, deliberate journalistic misrepresentation, and revisionist history. Adams explains, "Myths are ways we try to shape a usable past to help in directing present actions and setting our future course [...] In World War II, only positive aspects of the war received mainstream attention, setting a pattern for interpreting the war's meaning" (Adams 131). Therefore, one can discern how the relative quietness of World War II soldiers to control the narrative of their experience allowed for a heightened role of the media to fill that void. Despite those soldiers who did speak and write about their experiences, both proud and conflicted, this did not stop World War II soldier-poets from being anointed as

"The Silent Generation" (Langbaum 87). This critique of silence was levied against World War II soldiers to contrast them with the soldier-poets and novelists of the First World War such as Hemingway, Owen, Sassoon, and Remarque, who had become synonymous with the war. Though poets such as Keith Douglas, Randall Jarrell, and Karl Shapiro all published work during World War II, many poets categorized as members of "the Silent Generation" had a delayed recognition of their war poems, a body of work one could argue has still not been fully recognized. American poet Howard Nemerov wrote poems tinted by war throughout his career, and "The War in the Air" and "Ultima Ratio Reagan" are examples of how his reflective mode shows the disparity between his view of the war and public and political perception.

Howard Nemerov

Emotional distancing is a key characteristic in the poetry of World War II pilot Howard Nemerov. Nemerov's poems are explorations in how first-hand war experience intersects with public perception of war, how the delayed response to traumatic experience manifests in daily life, and how these issues influence emotional engagement between the soldier-turned-civilian and the war they carry inside them. Published in his 1987 collection *War Stories: Poems about Long Ago and Now*, Howard Nemerov's poem "The War in the Air" exemplifies the divide between his experience in World War II and the generally accepted rhetoric of war commentary. Writing of service in both the Canadian Royal Air Force and the US Air Force, Nemerov's poem begins with a silver lining about the effect of pilot's deaths on other members of the air force:

For a saving grace, we didn't see our dead,

Who rarely bothered coming home to die

But simply stayed away out there

In the clean war, the war in the air. ("The War in the Air" 1-4)

Resigned to the knowledge that encountering death in wartime is inevitable, the speaker is cognizant of the relative anonymity with which airmen die. Yet, the subtlety of referring to air combat in World War II as "the clean war" alludes to the distance of engagement for pilots, not having to literally be embedded in the earth like the soldiers in foxholes or the trenches of their First World War predecessors, or to figuratively describe the messiness of killing at close range. One could argue the mental and emotional respite this serves, to be absolved of the close visual trauma of combat, though Nemerov's mention of "the clean war" forty years after the conclusion of World War II is proof that the war, regardless of how removed a pilot is from face-to-face action, stays with its combatants. Pilots who die in service are often relegated to the ether of memory, and Nemerov continues "Seldom the ghosts come back bearing their tales" (5) of crashing to earth or sea, but rather, like Jarrell's fly caught in amber from "A Lullaby," they remain "in the relative wind" (7). Nemerov then weaves the motto of the Air Force, "Per ardua ad astra," into the poem as an elegiac nod to those who were lost. Translated as both "Through struggles to the stars" and "Through adversity to the stars," the motto in the context of Nemerov's poem is both a dedication to service and an allusion to the death of airmen who did not return, remaining in the stars, or an allusion to a heavenward departure from earth ("The Royal Air Force Motto"). The poem's turn occurs in the final stanza, where Nemerov sarcastically engages the mythology of World War II as "the good war" when he declares, "That was the good war, the war we won" ("The War in the Air" 13). Nemerov's reaction is particularly potent

because the poem is written at a time of heightened public discourse over the controversial legacy of the Vietnam War and rising tensions in the Cold War. In referring to World War II as “the war we won,” Nemerov points out the fallacy of wars being deemed good, bad, great, or otherwise based on the outcome of winners and losers, highlighting the callousness of reducing millions of deaths not as *the lost*, but losers. Nemerov continues to challenge the mythmaking conventions that whitewash World War II “As if there was no death, for goodness’s sake” (14). Nemerov is countering the reduction of war to such simplistic terms by using the terminology of the media and public to position them to accept guilt, to recognize that it was “With the help of the losers we left out there / In the air, in the empty air” that the Allied Forces were victorious in World War II (15-16). By repurposing the language used by those who retrospectively shape the narrative of war, Nemerov is forcing readers to recognize that there are no true *winners* in war, and that to suggest so is to ignore those who died for country and cause.

Another charge against the rhetoric of war making from Nemerov’s collection *War Stories* is the poem “Ultima Ratio Reagan.” In the wake of the Vietnam War, and as the Cold War was heating up, “Ultima Ratio Reagan” is a play on words referencing then President Ronald Reagan and Stephen Spender’s poem “Ultima Ratio Regum” which is translated as “the ultimate, or the final argument of kings” (“Ultima Ratio Regum”). Outraged by the cycle of war, seemingly without any regard for previous generations and conflicts, Nemerov’s “Ultima Ratio Reagan” begins “The reason we do not learn from history is / Because we are not the people who learned last time” (“Ultima Ratio Reagan” 1-2). Dispelling the inflated sense of wisdom of the current generation, the presumption that the current state knows more than those who preceded them, Nemerov is implying that if the current generation had direct experience with the wars of the past, they would not be so quick to reengage. Though Reagan had enlisted in the Army, he

never served overseas, a detail that makes Nemerov more skeptical of the President's affiliation with war glory without the combat experience that may give him pause over sending others to war. Nemerov reinforces the public dissent for the Vietnam War in the lines that follow, continuing "Because we are not the same people as them / That fed our sons and honor to Vietnam / And dropped the burning money on the trees" (3-5). Nemerov challenges the methods and economic motives of war, further muddying the concept of morality exuded by American intervention, as suggested by the youth, honor, and money lost to the conflict. As explained by Subarno Chattarji, "Ultima Ratio Reagan" is a poem that highlights the "arrogance of each generation that believes in its ideals as absolute entities... a contributory factor in the destruction of Vietnam which, paradoxically, America was trying to 'save' (Chattarji 63-64). This "arrogance" that Chattarji identifies is most noticeable as Nemerov writes "We know that we know better than they knew" ("Ultima Ratio Reagan" 6). Here, Nemerov is critiquing the belief that because America has had moments of military victory acting on behalf of a greater good that other countries do not know what is best for them and America is incapable of wrongdoing. This misappropriation and cultural blindness is perpetuated in ongoing global interventions, a certainty that Nemerov is resigned to at the conclusion of the poem: "And history will not blame us if once again / The light at the end of the tunnel is the train" (7-8). America's cyclical return to thoughts of the economic and cultural boom generated by World War II, in the form of patriotism, industrial output, and societal development, is a methodology that encourages cultural amnesia for the human cost of war. In these final lines of "Ultima Ratio Reagan," Nemerov warns that the world will not look kindly upon America or extend sympathy if, in time, America endures the repercussions of sustaining a perpetual state of war. The matter of public perception is the primary difference between poems like "Ultima Ratio Reagan" and "The War in

the Air." The legacy of each Twentieth Century American generation bearing its own war, the accumulation of trauma and loss coupled with ever-encompassing media coverage of war, force a more discerning public to question American involvement in Vietnam while the legacy of World War II as "the good war" remains largely unchallenged by the general populace.

Any discussion of a war's legacy is bound to drum up conflicting opinions based on perspective, experience, and the varying strands of repercussion. As a survivor of World War II Howard Nemerov's attempts to internalize and externalize the impact of war were a work-in-progress throughout his life. In discussing post-traumatic stress disorder, Cathy Caruth explains "there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event" and that the structure of the experience contributes to its reception in the individual (Caruth 4). In other words "the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it" (4). A belated return to a traumatic event is exemplified in Nemerov's poems "Redeployment" and "30th Anniversary Report of the Class of '41."

Nemerov's "Redeployment" reinforces the presence of war's lingering effects in its opening lines "They say the war is over. But water still / Comes bloody from the taps" ("Redeployment" 1-2). This imagery distinguishes the literal and figurative difference between a war's conclusion for the narratives of history and the ongoing processing of trauma for the individual participants. Nemerov deceptively deploys precise terminology to describe the way soldiers are always carrying with them the legacy of war:

The war may be over. I know a man
Who keeps a pleasant souvenir, he keeps

A soldier's dead blue eyeballs that he found

Somewhere—hard as chalk, blue as slate.

He clicks them in his pocket while he talks. (6-10)

Like a nervous tic, the soldier clicks these hardened eyes against one another in his pocket, a hallucinatory moment suggesting that unseen objects take on haunting qualities. Prefaced by "The war may be over," the speaker is placing reality and illusion side-by-side so that the reader can understand the dissociative properties of traumatic memory, and how despite the war being over, the memories and sensory observations are not easily forgotten. The final stanza shows this attempt of a soldier to take one step at a time to return to a normal functioning life:

The end of the war. I took it quietly

Enough. I tried to wash the dirt out of

My hair and from under my fingernails,

I dressed in clean white clothes and went to bed.

I heard the dust falling between the walls. (16-20)

For this speaker, quietly washing hands, putting on clean clothes, and going to bed—mundane acts, as well as metaphorical acts of purifying oneself—are not enough to keep the mind quiet. It is the usually imperceptible senses that are heightened and haunting, as they hear dust "falling between the walls," a remark that magnifies how the speaker took the end of the war quietly. In other words, by not saying much about their experience, soldiers endure a heightened sensitivity to their memory. A key to this being a PTSD poem, beyond the text telling us what the speaker deals with despite the war being over, is the title itself. For the war to be over, but the speaker to suggest each day is an act of "Redeployment," we see how quotidian events are

reminders of the war or are altogether disrupted by the memory of war. War interjects traumatic imagery into turning on a faucet, a cat vomiting, reaching into one's pockets, cockroaches scuttling in the house, cleaning and getting dressed, and trying to sleep. To recall Cathy Caruth's words, Nemerov is displaying traumatic memory through the description of "intrusive hallucinations." Ordinary occurrences also take on a darker spin in Nemerov's "30th Anniversary Report of the Class of '41."

Meshing soldier and civilian life, Nemerov explores the idea of emotional detachment from family and community life in "30th Anniversary Report of the Class of '41." Most notably indicative of a sense of detachment in "30th Anniversary Report of the Class of '41" is the fact that getting married, having children, working, having an affair and dealing with the fallout, having relatives die, and watching family members grow old—events that mark a lifetime—are all presented as an aside to the poem's main point. If you reconstruct the poem as a streamlined narrative, removing the aforementioned segments from lines 1-12, and leave the first thought and final stanza, you are left with "We who survived the war... // Are done with it. What is there to discuss? / There's nothing left for us to say of us" ("30th Anniversary Report of the Class of '41" 1, 13-14). One can imagine a school or university reunion marking 30 years since graduation, and not wanting to be defined by war service or continually relive the trauma of war amid a lifetime of love, loss, death, betrayal, and countless other happenings. Similar to the stunted aspirations of poets at the start of World War II who stood in the long shadow of First World War poets, Nemerov feels as if the narrative of World War II has been exhausted. Akin to Keith Douglas's nod to Isaac Rosenberg in "Desert Flowers," writing "Rosenberg I only repeat what you were saying," Nemerov is trying to be mindful not to rehash the past so he can try to move on ("Desert Flowers" 2). Yet, Nemerov publishes "30th Anniversary Report of the Class of

'41" in the early 1970s, sparking a creative outburst of writing poetry about war, as evidenced by his collection *War Stories* and other collections in the 1970s and 80s. This struggle for Nemerov to suppress war's presence in his life became increasingly difficult as a civilian who lived through America's re-entry into war, and also because he had no choice but to reckon with the lasting memories of his own war experience. Despite Nemerov posing the question "What is there to discuss?" he learns that war will not leave his periphery. Precisely because of having to deal with his own delayed response to traumatic memory, Nemerov is pushed to write poems that warn of the consequences of war.

In each of these four poems by Howard Nemerov—"The War in the Air," "Ultima Ratio Reagan," "Redeployment," and "30th Anniversary Report of the Class of '41"—there are varying levels of emotional engagement that the soldier and civilian self has with war, both intentionally and begrudgingly. What is indisputable is that for forty years after World War II, Howard Nemerov carried his war experience with him. Nemerov's poetry is undoubtedly influenced by his war experience, whether he was decrying the misleading mythology of war rhetoric in "The War in the Air" or exposing the short-sighted, reckless, and ignorant willingness for perpetual war in "Ultima Ratio Reagan." Nemerov also catalogued the traumatic thoughts that a soldier is plagued by in "Redeployment" and expressed defeat from trying to move on from war in "30th Anniversary Report of the Class of '41." Nemerov's moments of heightened emotional engagements with war are intended to honor the sacrificial dead pilots in his sarcasm-riddled homage to "the losers" ("The War in the Air"), warn current and future generations about PTSD by detailing how one relives the horror and loss experienced in World War II ("Redeployment"), and call out the ignorance of world leaders acting without a sense of history or consequence ("Ultima Ratio Reagan").

Though Nemerov experienced a large literal distance between himself and his combatants because he was an Air Force pilot, the figurative distance between himself and the war was indistinguishable in his work. As noted with other soldiers serving in the Air Force, such as Randall Jarrell, the distance of war experienced from the air or from airbases forces the individual to fill in the gaps of experience that are not processed with the same acuity as ground combat. Since pilots and instructors contribute to the war effort from a physically distanced perspective compared to ground troops, the absence of up-close traumatic images supplanted by potentially seeing explosions and damaged targets from above, the photographs and video documentation of the war have the potential to become extensions of one's memory and guilt. In other words, if a pilot or instructor who facilitates the bombing of foreign targets encounters the visual documentation of that damage or imagines it on their own, this delayed experience of the destruction they caused can trigger a delayed onset of trauma. Therefore, in spite of the literal distance that existed between members of the Air Force and their targets, the figurative distance between an individual and the traumatic experience that stays with them for the remainder of their lives is non-existent.

Richard Hugo

At a literary gathering in San Francisco in the 1970s, American poet and former World War II bombardier Richard Hugo met Serbian-American poet Charles Simic. As the two spoke, Simic recalled his experience as a five-year-old in Belgrade, Serbia, where he survived a 1943 bombing campaign by the United States who were attempting to cut off Nazi movement by destroying bridges over the Danube River. In a moment of great coincidence, Hugo recognized that he was also present in Simic's story because he was one of the pilots who was dropping

those bombs. Hugo was among the fleet whose bombs narrowly avoided Simic, including an unexploded bomb outside of his house. This realization humbled an apologetic Hugo, who later addressed this moment in a direct, autobiographical poem titled "Letter to Simic from Boulder." Hugo's stance that American military involvement in World War II was simply a job that needed to be done is captured in the lines "I was interested mainly in staying alive, that moment / the plane jumped free from the weight of bombs and we went home" ("Letter to Simic from Boulder" 12-13). Though clouded by the threat of death, Hugo's mission is treated as if he is a factory worker who punches the clock, works, and punches out, anxious to get home. The impersonality of Hugo's war service is clear when he recalls the emotional distance present when "our bomb bays empty, the target forgotten, / the enemy ignored" (33-34). The most telling moment of "Letter to Simic from Boulder" is also its most direct, in which Hugo broadens his scope to ruminate on his role in the war, war itself, and the cyclical nature of history:

I don't apologize for the war, or what I was. I was
willingly confused by the times. I think I even believed
in heroics (for others, not for me). I believed the necessity
of that suffering world, hoping it would learn not to do
it again. But I was young. The world never learns. History
has a way of making the past palatable, the dead
a dream. (18-24)

Here, Hugo admits confusion over the circumstance of war, suspends belief that one's actions are heroic, and that the world's suffering as "necessity" to learn from historical ills, but he ultimately realizes "The world never learns" and that even the most egregious lapses of a collective humanity are not enough to protect against evil and its repetition. Though the form of

Hugo's poem is that of a literal letter, beginning with "Dear Charles" (1) and ending with "Your friend, Dick" (39), the direct language and absence of comparisons or allusions which would serve the purpose of masking or layering intent are acts of reportage. Similarly to Owen's interjection of "Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!" in "Dulce Et Decorum Est" ("Dulce" 9), a literal battlefield intrusion of warning rather than observing and interpreting a scene, Hugo's reflection on the war deliberately recalls feelings of indecision, optimism replaced by realism, and a degree of resignation that "The world never learns. History / has a way of making the past palatable, the dead / a dream" ("Letter" 22-24). This feeling of resignation is not exclusive to World War II, as we see with Siegfried Sassoon's "The Hero," in which a fellow soldier is "Blown to small bits" and yet, "no one seemed to care" ("The Hero" 17). A notable difference between Sassoon's "The Hero" and Hugo's "Letter to Simic from Boulder," is that though Hugo does not feel guilty for participating in the war, he expresses empathy for those affected by his actions. Now that Hugo has a face to associate with the once anonymous collateral damage of a bombing campaign, Simic, the "mindless hate" that drove the war feels trivial ("Letter" 35).

As a foundational poetic voice of America's Pacific Northwest, Richard Hugo's poems are known for their inseparable relationship to place. Having drawn upon the rural landscapes of Washington and Montana in much of his work, Hugo stowed away his wartime experience for retrospective works as part of a delayed response. As a poet who did not publish his first book until 1961, sixteen years after his service as a bombardier in World War II concluded, it was not until his 1969 collection *Good Luck in Cracked Italian* that Hugo dove extensively into his war memories, prompted by returning to the Mediterranean sites of his traumatic war experience. Some of Hugo's most poignant poems about his wartime experience come from reflecting on his service as he returned to the locations of his traumatic years in World War II.

The poems in Hugo's *Good Luck in Cracked Italian* chronicle his 1963 return to postwar Europe, with poems retracing his steps in Italy and the former Yugoslavia. Using place to reflect on memory is the poem "Note from Capri to Richard Ryan on the Adriatic Floor," a letter to a dead friend written from the rocks they sat on in Capri during the war. In the poem, Hugo drinks and imagines the decay of his friend's body, buried on the sea floor after crashing. Hugo writes as if Richard Ryan is still alive, "Dick, I went back to those rocks today, / the ones we ate on nineteen years ago" ("Note from Capri to Richard Ryan on the Adriatic Floor" 1-2). Though Hugo grudgingly blames Ryan for being "a damn fool" (3) and taking risks while flying, his attention is more fixated on the landscape, how "The rocks have changed" (7) from "years / of wave and storm" (7-8), and presumably like Hugo himself have taken on "rough edges" (9) from the years of erosion. In an uncharacteristic shift, Hugo invokes grotesque imagery as he imagines the state of Ryan's body in the sea, with "slow eels / sliding through your eyes" (14-15) and barnacles accruing on his bones. The vowel sounds of "slow eels / sliding through your eyes" mimic the slow coiling penetration of the eels, transitioning from "oh" to "ee" to "i" to "ooh" to "oh" to "i," a phrase that forces the reader to slow down as each word shifts the mouth to a different shape. This deceleration coincides with the pensiveness in the poem, a speaker slowing time down and taking a moment to reflect on the past. Ultimately, this physical change to the body is not the focal point for Hugo, but it is the persistence of wartime memory, and how this place that was formerly a positive memory is now forever marked by tragedy. "Dick," Hugo concludes, "I went back to those rocks today, / and sat there, glaring at the sea" (21-22). By revisiting a site of trauma, even though Hugo must endure the pain that comes with the memories of a dead friend, it is a location where Richard Ryan survives, at least in memory. By retracing his steps, Hugo revives the memory of those who were lost so that they may live again.

Just after "Note from Capri to Richard Ryan on the Adriatic Floor" in Hugo's collection *Good Luck in Cracked Italian* is the poem "The Yards of Sarajevo," which like many of Hugo's poems about revisiting sites of war, is a poem about confronting the place and people who were subjected to a bombing campaign Hugo participated in during the war. What distinguishes "The Yards of Sarajevo" from his Italy poems is that this train yard was a target the Allies attempted to hit from the air, but it was not a place he stepped foot in. As his train arrives in the station, among his first thoughts are "These people, tracks and cars were what / we came to bomb nineteen years ago" ("The Yards of Sarajevo" 5-6). Just like the low visibility he had when trying to strategically bomb the train yard in World War II, Hugo equates this to the lack of foresight people have in the wake of great historical ills:

One war started here. The coal smoke
of our dirty train compounds the gloom.
The past is always dim. A plot. A gun.
The Archduke falling. A world gone
back to mud. (8-12)

Hugo extends the historical scope of the poem to link the unknowable destruction brought on by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the onset of the First World War. By channeling imagery of trench warfare in the First World War by noting "A world gone back to mud," Hugo paints war as a devolution of man, returning to an early evolutionary state of elements. Furthermore, decisions that are made in the past are seen as "dim" (appropriately, both the absence of light, and slang for stupid), as though time sheds light on our histories so that we may understand them with greater context. This regression sets off a chain reaction of events that would unfurl into World War II. Throughout this three-stanza, 22-line poem, is the

recurring images of hindered sight. Hugo's attempts to bomb the station "through blinding clouds" (7), as the train arrives "The coal smoke" (8) reduces visibility like the dim past, and now in the "rebuilt / and modern" (21-22) train station "Only the lighting" is "bad" (22). Throughout history, wars are fought over concerns of the past, present, and future, and Hugo is pointing out the inherent blindness with which countries enter armed conflict, unable to predict the outcome, losses, and consequences. For an Air Force bomber five miles above ground the target is just a cross-section of coordinates, and for Hugo who is seeing that missed target on the ground by literally putting himself in the once-intended blast zone, he erases whatever ignorance he may have about the place and people who would be directly affected by that action. Hugo is not trying to take back his actions or apologize for what he did during the war, but by knowing more intimately the human cost and cultural ramifications of war he is better situated to recontextualize his guilt.

In each of the aforementioned poems from *Good Luck in Cracked Italian*, Richard Hugo revisits the sites he identifies with traumatic war experiences. In doing so, Hugo's memories are confronted with the reality that the world has changed, those memories must be updated to accommodate these changes, and through exposure he may be able to "overcome anxiety associated with the event" (Murray 2). Hugo repurposes his observations of landscape in the *Good Luck in Cracked Italian* post-war European visit poems to measure the change of places and people, and to calibrate his own guilt and trauma in relation to the suffering of civilians and the deaths of fellow soldiers. Similar to the reflection of Howard Nemerov's post-war poems, revisiting the past contains a range of purposes for the individual to mine both the literal spaces in which war was conducted and the landscapes of the mind where the war remains active for those who experienced it firsthand.

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