War Photographer Comparison

In War Photographer, the poet portrays that conflict is severe and explores the disastrous effects of it. This is implied through metaphors especially when it describes seeing a man ‘a half-formed ghost’. Remains similarly explores the idea of conflict but shows its lasting effect through similar techniques like repetition as when the poet repeats ‘dozen rounds.’

In War Photographer, Duffy uses a range of techniques to explore the idea of conflict and its evil nature. As said before, metaphors are used like ‘half formed ghost’ to portray the photograph that he took was of a dying man and to get the reader to understand the severity of war and the lives cost in it. The overall point of this poem is to convey the cruelty of war and what it accomplishes. The poet expresses the dilemma faced by the photographer in these circumstances through the way he ‘sought approval’ and tried to make ‘the readers eyeballs prick’ so that they would care. Duffy was inspired to write this poem by her friendship with a war photographer. She was especially intrigued by the peculiar challenge faced by these people whose job requires them to record terrible, horrific events without being able to directly help their subjects. The use of a semantic field of death shows the very dark side of conflict and gives an almost savage and sinister edge to the poem to make the act of war all the more evil. The poet does this to make the point that such wars create extremely dark times as explored in the sibilance of the piece ‘with spools of suffering set out in ordered rows’. The use of the word ‘suffering’ implies very bad conditions and the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship. As this is referring to war it is a safe inference to say that war creates pain, suffering and hardship. This is further emphasised in the way the pet compares a war zone to a normal place: ‘Rural England. Home again to ordinary pain which simple weather can dispel, to field which don’t explode beneath our feet’. The oxymoron of ‘ordinary pain’ implies pain is common and the use here shows that in a war zone the type of pain felt is never felt in ordinary places as back up in the way it says ‘fields don’t explode beneath our feet’. Also the way England is described is quite idyllic where all they long for is ‘simple weather’ and hands which ‘did not tremble’. This implies fear in their current circumstances. This makes the reader understand the horror of war and the severity of it because people who are living it are dying, scared and yearn for the normalcy of other lives. Linking back to the point, the author shows the cruelty of war using these ideas.

Similarly, in another poem, Armitage explore conflict but the lasting effect of it instead. The poet uses metaphors as well to explore the lives lost in the wars fought: ‘I see every round as it rips through his life’. This implies a double meaning, the person shot is not the only one that the bullet ‘ripped’ through but the act also ‘ripped’ through the person firing it. This then begs the idea that the people who lived through the wars left with scars as well, if not physical. The lack of description and the almost nameless people in the poem ‘somebody else and somebody else’ gives an almost chilling feel to the piece and it almost seems like the author has become detached from the act and no longer feels emotion, a clear side effect to the terrors of war. Simon Armitage’s poetry is known for its colloquial style and deals with personal relationships, often drawing on his own life experience. This particular poem lacks the humour of some of his other work and instead presents a dark and disturbing image of a soldier suffering post-traumatic stress disorder, to show the lasting effect of war on individuals. Also, the use of repetition in the way he keeps remembering the ‘dozen rounds’ that killed the man and the fact this stays ‘week after week’ shows he can’t let it go and the fact ‘drink and drugs wont flush him out’ furthers this point. His guilt is continued to be explores in the metaphor ‘his bloody life in my bloody hands’. The poet is trying to suggest that your deeds and demons from war and your life in war follow you home and create a very real and dramatic effect. The poet describes feeling the presence of those he murdered ‘not left for dead in some distant, sun-stunned, sand smothered land’ but in fact they are ‘here with me’. The sibilance also used in that particular quotation highlights the severity of the war as in the previous poem.

In War Photographer, the poet uses 3rd person to create a very detached and descriptive tone. It’s like looking in on the scene and seeing the injustice and makes the reader almost want to beg the photographer to help. Also it’s easier to see the dilemmas in his head and understand the contrast between a warzone and home. The overall tone of the piece is almost melancholy because it referred to being back in normal life but the remembrance of the place he left and the pain felt because no one can bring themselves to care because it’s not happening to them.

Similarly in Remains, the author uses a detached tone but his is colloquial to create a sense of a chatty nature to make the issue more relevant and makes the author create a sense of realism. It makes the piece more effective as it is more informal and sounds as if it’s coming from the heart. The use of first person draws the reader into his mind and makes it easier to express the thought and detached nature of the poem. This makes it more effective as it shows how the effects of war can change a person making them emotionless about their acts and eventually suffer.

In War Photographer, the poet uses end rhyming, enjambment and caesura to create a flow to the piece and make the thought pattern of the poet easier to understand and follow. Also the use of enjambment gives a new take on the repeated and continuous nature of war because it sets a continuous flow to the dark nature of it and makes which makes it seem never ending. This makes the author feel sympathetic towards those affected by it because this is their normal and seems never-ending.

In Remains, the poet also uses the techniques of enjambment and caesura to makes the story flow but in this case it’s like telling the story. The lack of rhyming pattern also gives an informal finish to the piece as it makes it feel a bit disjointed like his thoughts are getting muddled and the ending of the poem being the guilt over the man he killed ends perfectly that he struggled to think about anything else and concentrate because he is so obsessed with his own guilt and remorse. This is the lasting effect war has on people.

To conclude, War Photographer looks at the severity of conflict and Remains looks at the lasting effect conflict has on people, not just those who are killed but those who did the killing and the mental effects of wars.

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