

"hitcher", "salome" and "the man he killed" essay sample

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How do the writers explore and present the themes of conscience, violence and murder in the poems ' Hitcher' by Simon Armitage, ' Salome' by Carol Ann Duffy and ' The Man He Killed' by Thomas Hardy?

' Hitcher' was written by Simon Armitage in 2001, two years earlier (in 1999) Carol Ann Duffy wrote ' Salome' but the oldest poem I intend to analyse is ' The Man He Killed' written by Thomas Hardy in 1902. All three poems explore the three themes of conscience, violence and murder however all the authors express them in different ways. Simon Armitage's poem was about a psychotic and jealous slacker who dreamed of being free. He sees a hitcher who is free and a feeling of envy overcomes him, he then picks the hitcher up and in a series of sarcastic violent beatings he throws the hitcher out of the car and afterwards feels very proud and is portrayed as quite a narcissist through being very arrogant.

This is conveyed via several sarcastic comments such as " Stitch that, I remember thinking; you can walk from there" this is sarcastic because obviously after all the hitcher has been through if he's not dead he's going to need stitches and quite certainly he would not be able to walk. Armitage captures the themes of violence very well and obviously this man has no conscience whatsoever as there is no sign of regret or remorse after the beatings he has given to this poor man and instead he starts discussing the weather. There is lots of violence such as when Armitage says " I let him have it; on the top road out of Harrogate-once; with the head, then six times with the kooklok" this goes into shocking detail and paints a rather vivid image in our minds which makes the reader understand the use of violence.

There is no certain theme of murder although it does seem highly likely the hitcher is dead but the poem doesn't clarify this.

Thomas Hardy's 'The Man He Killed' explores the themes of violence, conscience and murder but very differently. It's about a soldier telling his friends about his experiences in the Boer war, several quotes show that he found killing a negative experience when he says "I shot at him as he at me." The only violence used is justifiable and is quite necessary in order to survive. No language devices are used to represent the narrators feelings because he thinks killing a man shouldn't be compared to anything else thus proving that unlike 'Hitcher' this man has a conscience you can tell this from when he says "I shot him dead because-; Because he was my foe" the pause used when he repeats shows he is feeling guilty because he hesitates this is when he has the epiphany of just how "quaint and curious war is" thus saying war is.

The narrator mentions that if they had met anywhere else but war "By some ancient inn; We should have sat us down to wet; Right many a nipperkin!" this meaning if they had met in a pub they'd have had a good time. This is then followed with an explanation of why they couldn't do that but it is only an explanation this man does not want to be dismissed as a justifiable killer, he thinks he killed this man in cold blood. However all this makes the reader feel sympathy for him as we think it's not his fault. But the narrator makes this poem as direct as can be as to make his message clear. The theme of murder again is justifiable. The fourth verse points out that no-one considers the consequences of joining the army; "He thought he'd 'list, perhaps".

'Salome' written by Carol Ann Duffy is based on a bible story, the bible story is that Salome was the daughter of a woman named Herodias who was married to King Herod's brother, after he died Herodias remarried to King Herod. John the Baptist was against this. Salome then did a 'dance' for King Herod who in return gave her one wish. She asked her mother for advice and as Herodias was infuriated by John the Baptist she asked her daughter to wish for his head on a platter.

That is the story of Salome. Anyway, the narrator is portrayed as arrogant when she says "Ain't life a bitch" and promiscuous when she says "woke up with a head on the pillow beside me-whose?" and psychotic when she says "I've done it before; and doubtless I'll do it again", this doesn't seem too bad until later she says "head on a platter", proving that she is an absolute psychotic maniac who is repeatedly decapitating her victims. Also the use of half-rhymes such as "clutter", "clatter", "platter" and "batter" represent her mental instability. "Come like a lamb to the slaughter; to Salome's bed." shows how manipulative Salome is. "Saw my eyes glitter" shows just how evil she is. "Booze", "fags" and "sex" all show that this is a modern version. When she is guessing names "Peter? Simon? Andrew? John?" are all biblical names referring back to the bible story of Salome. Referring back to when I said earlier that she was arrogant another piece of text that proves this is when the narrator says "Good-looking, of course," this shows us that she is extremely self-involved. She describes killing someone as an achievement "In the mirror I saw my eyes glitter". We see her happiness here.

'Salome' and 'Hitcher' are most alike in the fact that they both find killing a positive experience whereas in 'The Man He Killed' the narrator finds killing a negative experience, we can tell this from his hesitation in stanza three when the poet uses repetition teamed with hesitation to create a remorse effect "because- ; Because he was my foe," whereas in 'Hitcher' he says "I dropped it into third" proving that he's just killed someone and doesn't feel any regret whatsoever. In 'Salome' she is so arrogant that she doesn't have a conscience "It was time to turf out the blighter; the beater or biter" which she thinks that it's his own fault when she says "like a lamb to the slaughter". This implies he was weak and innocent.

'The Man He Killed' has a steady rhythm and rhyming structure because all stanzas are equal in length. The narrator uses absolutely no language device in order to fulfil maximum potential of coming across as direct as can be. The narrator is the only one out of the three that actually has an excusable motivation of being at war and his was more like his survival instinct. In 'Salome' her motivation was misandry (hatred of men). Finally in 'Hitcher' his motive was jealousy. When he says "I thumbed a lift to where the car was parked" he is 'pretending' to be a hitchhiker. Salome has an erratic rhyming scheme, where words half rhyme. Hitcher also uses enjambment where he lines run on to the next line.

The narrator in 'Salome' uses many devices including metaphor when she says "Ain't life a bitch", simile when she says "Like a lamb to the slaughter" also here it shows premeditated killing of an innocent victim. And she uses triplication twice, first in stanza two "Simon, Andrew, John?" and again in

line 29-30 " the blighter, the beater or biter". This shows she's promiscuous. Also in ' Salome' she uses stanzas of unequal length; another factor which contributes to her being extremely mentally unstable. The poem sounds more conversational which shows she's very casual about violence. In ' Hitcher' he uses no rhyming scheme but each stanza is of equal length. There is no rhythm either. In ' The Man He Killed' there is a regular rhythm and rhyming scheme he does this so it's easy to follow. All this contributes to him being direct.

' Hitcher' uses several metaphors for example " Stitch that" which is a pun because obviously IF he survives he'll need stitches. It also uses personification " the ansaphone kept screaming" and " the breeze to run its fingers through his hair." This meaning that the ansaphone doesn't scream and the breeze did run its fingers through his hair when he pushed him out of the car!

My favourite poem was ' Salome' because of all the psychotic violence and the sarcasm and biblical references made it interesting. I loved how gruesome it was and my favourite part was when she says " Ain't life a bitch" sarcastically. ' Hitcher' comes second because again the violence and his arrogance when he says " I didn't even swerve". ' The Man He Killed' was my least favourite because it reminds me more of a short story than a poem. ' Hitcher' was attention grabbing whereas ' The Man He Killed' was thought provoking and ' Salome' was just plain bloodthirsty.

In this essay I have proven how similar all three poems have been in comparison. 'Hitcher' and 'Salome' are very alike but in some parts are alike to 'The Man He Killed'. The themes of violence, conscience and murder are all expressed in very different ways. All were strangely unique in their own way which made them very interesting when put in comparison.