

The presentation of suffering in "remains" and "war photographer"



Within Remains, Simon Armitage, who is widely known for focusing on physiological health and for creating a documentary of young soldier in the height of the conflict occurring in Afghanistan, presents the theme of suffering through the personal view of a young, regimented soldier, by sharing a scene which had clearly left a pit of guilt and had caused physiological health problems such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This is because he the man he " and somebody else and somebody else" shot a man who was raiding a bank, however he was " possibly armed, possibly not" which has sparked uncertainty in the soldier's mind, filling him with guilt as he may have shot an innocent man. Comparatively, Carol Ann Duffy, a social critic and holder of the title of Poet Laureate, conveyed suffering by focusing on the memories and flashbacks that a photographer experienced whilst developing his photos " in his darkroom" that he had taken during the wars. The war photographer clearly makes an experienced attempt at detaching himself from the " hundred agonies in black-and-white" so he can focus on the work at hand as a desperate coping mechanism, however a certain memory weaves its way to the front of his mind as he remembers " the cries of this man's wife" and reconnects with a very important moment for the woman - her husband's death.

Symbolism is used by Simon Armitage within Remains to describe the way " this looter" was haunting the soldier's memory and was appearing everywhere, effectively ensuring that the young soldier wouldn't even be able to enter " the doors of the bank" without entering a living flashback. The soldier's memories of the bank appear to represent a bursting river bank, where the sweeping current of his memories are too strong to

compress at the sight of the bank he regularly visits for his own use because his immense war experiences have impacted his mind so much so that anything holding the slightest resemblance to his regimented past will bring the memories flooding back. The ex-soldier seems to be suffering from PTSD after a horrific incident which left him wondering if he had murdered an innocent man with " somebody else and somebody else", or if the soldiers had been correct and killed somebody who was potentially about to harm a lot of people. Repetition is also used earlier in the poem to describe the way there is no escape from the self-condemnation that the looter was " probably armed, possibly not". Because the soldier cannot even sleep without nightmares of this man, it causing him to turn to self medication with " drink and [drugs]" and even that, still won't " flush him out". The fact alone that he is using " drink and [drugs]" show that the man is no longer in the army, whether he left of his own accord or not, the soldiers would have been regularly examined for these things, although they were not tested for mental health issues and so did not receive any help on this element. The alliteration used, further indicates a lack of support he received because he should have been talking to a therapist about his mental health issues, although 0. 4% of military money goes towards the mental health of soldiers, making it unlikely his illness would be noticed. The way the soldier describes the "[looter]" as alive indicates that he lives on in his memory.

Furthermore, the metaphor Armitage uses to state how the dead man appears everywhere without exception conveys ideas that both the looter and the speaker were victims, although for different reasons. Because the man is " in [the soldier's] mind when [he closes his] eyes", it gives the

impression that the mental health issues almost become something that's utterly inescapable from. Colloquial language is also used by the soldier to describe how the soldier felt towards the shooting, feeling as if the victim's "bloody life" ended because of his "bloody hands". The adjective "bloody" that was used to describe the dead man's life implies that the young man felt solely responsible for "[ripping] through [the looter's] life" and killing him. The grief he feels is reflected in his mental health issues, another of which could be OCD. The soldier could literally imagine the man's blood on his hands again and have caused his own hands to be bloody because he's washed them so much that he's torn the skin. A living scar is something his mental illnesses could be seen as, almost as if it were branded into his skin that he killed this man. The grief cursing through the soldier's body forces him to constantly ask himself if he's a murderer which could be why repetition of the adjective "bloody" is used. The idea of monotony and repetition causes thoughts that mean the speaker relives the event "again" and "again" and "again". This adverb indicates that there's no escape from the thoughts and by naming the dead man simply as a "looter", it implies that the soldier's thoughts can't be put to rest because this man is identified and anonymous, meaning that he can't visit his grave or apologise which only makes more regret surface. The dead man was "left for dead in some distant, sun-stunned, sand-smothered land or six-feet-under in desert sand" which offered no peace for the speaker because he could not even be certain that the man he killed had even had a proper burial. The sibilance creates an effect that draws attention to the quote, implying ideas of discontent and no closure, meaning that the dead man will forever be haunting his mind and causing him health issues because he can't be "[flushed] out".

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This contrasts to the "half-formed ghost" that "[starts] to twist" before the subject's eyes in War Photographer by Carol Ann Duffy, because although the metaphor also holds no detail in the "stranger's features" (conveying ideas of anonymity and a death that resembles the hundreds of others that the photographer has witnessed), the permanent stain of life that remains from "blood stained into foreign dust" allows the photographer to revisit the deathbed of the innocent man if he searched enough and wished to.

However, despite the fact that the photographer could pay a visit to the place this took place, he walked away because it happened elsewhere, although the memories were things he was unable to leave in the foreign country, along with the mental marks of war. The metaphor also implies that the blood of the innocent man had literally soaked into the ruined ground like an irremovable tattoo of life. Duffy also uses sibilance, symbolism and juxtaposition to describe how the spools of photographs morph into "spools of suffering [are] set out in ordered rows". The rows suggest a clear military link, representing the "ordered rows" soldiers would report to in the army, which is symbolism as it serves as a form of order within fields of chaos. A graveyard could also be interpreted as the "ordered rows", symbolising the huge loss of life and happiness that occurs throughout war. The sibilance in the powerful phrase "spools of suffering" validates ideas of life loss and the rows and rows of it show the small segment of it that James Nachtwey has captured in his spools of film. The quote also contains the juxtaposition of ideas that suffering is everywhere, thrown around in unorganised chaos, making everything violent and forcing innocent people to suffer, whilst being logically laid out in "ordered rows" like the armies that attempt to prevent and stop the wars.

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James Nachtwey is the war photographer being described. His aim was to capture and show to the world the true horrors of war, disprove the propaganda, show how many innocent women, men, children and families were being caught up in the loss and suffering. He wanted his work to inspire and support families affected by war, making his photographs an "antidote to war" and a way of "negotiating peace". His photos are a "protest to help other people join the protest" against war and propaganda. Nachtwey is aware that people see his work, and proceed to ignore it, or not do anything about it. He is aware that "they do not care" and simply continue with their daily lives, choosing to be ignorant and naive towards the real horrors of war that is masked by propaganda. This is partially because his editor will "pick out five or six" from "a hundred agonies in black-and-white" which show the least suffering, but still he continues to board "the aeroplane [where] he stares impassively at where he earns his living". The metaphor used to describe the amount of suffering and agony found in Nachtwey's photographs of war elicits ideas that the photographer is "alone" in a room filled with so much suffering, pain and death that he simply cannot detach himself anymore. The "black-and-white" photographs filled with "[agony]" implies that there were hundreds of lives that couldn't escape from the war they shouldn't have even been involved in. Enjambment is something Duffy also uses in the second stanza of her poem when stating how Nachtwey's hands "did not tremble then/though seem to now", which conveys feelings that when the photographer was surrounded by death, he could control and detach himself from his feelings towards the people dying in front of him because the camera acted as a shield, a protection against the real world so it almost seemed as if he wasn't there in person. It portrays ideas of

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vulnerability when alone, as well as implying that true terror is felt when there is no support around, or nobody to see your act fall to pieces.

The colours and imagery used in the adjectives conjure images of truthfulness, because black and white are colours generally associated with raw, hard truths. It is also as if the room holds its own hundreds of memories of war, which is why it depicts such emotions of vulnerability of the unarmoured, alone photographer. Because Nachtwey was alone, it meant he couldn't detach from everything, he wasn't protected from the violent memories being bombarded his way because he wasn't ever protected from sounds by his lens, and although he hoped the memories of war and pain wouldn't come home with him, they did because he "remembered the cries" of a wife that gave her wordless consent for her husband to be photographed in his last dying seconds.