

ASM TUITION ACADEMY

The reassurance of the frame is flexible

- you can think that just outside it
people eat, sleep, love normally
while I seek out the tragic, the absurd,
to make a subject.

Or if the picture's such as lifts the heart
the firmness of the edges can convince you
this is how things are

- as when at ascot once
I took a pair of peach, sun-gilded girls
rolling, silk crumpled, on the grass
in champagne giggles

-as last week, when I followed a small girl
staggering down some devastated street,
hip thrust out under a baby's weight.
she saw me seeing her; my finger pressed.

At the corner, the first bomb of the morning
shattered the stones .
Instinct prevailing, she dropped her burden
and, mouth too small for her dark scream,
began to run...

The picture showed the little mother
the almost-smile. Their caption read
'Even in hell the human spirit
triumphs over all.'
But hell' like heaven, is untidy,
its boundaries
arbitrary as a blood stain on a wall.

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WAR PHOTOGRAPHER

"War Photographer" by Carol Ann Duffy is a powerful poem that explores the themes of war, the impact of conflict on individuals, and the role of a war photographer. Let's delve into the theme, context, and structure of the poem.

Theme:

1. **The Reality of War:** The central theme revolves around the harsh realities of war and the aftermath captured through the lens of a war photographer. The poem addresses the disconnection between the atrocity of war and the comfort of the readers who view the photographs.
2. **The Isolation of the Photographer:** Another significant theme is the isolation and emotional detachment experienced by the war photographer. The poem explores the photographer's struggle to reconcile the brutality he witnesses with the indifference of those back home.
3. **Ethical Dilemma:** The poem delves into the ethical dilemmas faced by the war photographer as he navigates between his professional duty to document the truth and the moral responsibility to respect the dignity of the subjects depicted in the photographs.

Context:

1. **Post-Vietnam War Era:** The poem was written in the late 20th century, a period marked by the Vietnam War and numerous conflicts across the globe. The poem reflects the societal and ethical challenges faced by war photographers during this time.
2. **Advancements in Media:** The poem addresses the impact of media and the role of photographs in shaping public perception of war. It questions the voyeuristic nature of consuming war images and the potential desensitization to human suffering.

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Structure:

1. **First-Person Narrative:** The poem is written in the first person, allowing the war photographer to directly convey his experiences and emotions. This narrative choice enhances the immediacy and personal connection with the subject.
2. **Four Stanzas:** The poem is divided into four quatrains (four-line stanzas). Each stanza represents a different aspect of the war photographer's experience, from capturing images in the field to returning home and facing the apathy of the audience.
3. **Enjambment:** Like "Poppies," "War Photographer" utilizes enjambment, where lines flow into each other without a pause. This creates a continuous and fluid rhythm, mirroring the photographer's ongoing and interconnected experiences.
4. **Symbolic Imagery:** Duffy uses powerful and symbolic imagery throughout the poem. The "spools of suffering set out in ordered rows" and the "half-formed ghost" capture the haunting nature of war and the lingering impact on the photographer's psyche.
5. **Shift in Tone:** The tone of the poem undergoes a subtle shift. It begins with a clinical and detached description of the photographer's work, progresses to a more personal and introspective tone, and concludes with a sense of resignation and acceptance.

In summary, "War Photographer" is a thought-provoking poem that explores the complexities of war, the ethical challenges faced by those who document it, and the emotional toll on individuals involved. The structure, context, and thematic elements work together to create a nuanced portrayal of the photographer's experiences and the broader societal response to war imagery.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

"War Photographer" by Carol Ann Duffy is a poignant and thought-provoking poem that provides a critical examination of the role of war photographers and the moral complexities surrounding the documentation of human suffering. Here's a critical analysis of key elements within the poem:

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1. Ethical Dilemma:

- The poem presents a central ethical dilemma faced by the war photographer. While the photographer has a professional duty to capture the truth of war, he also grapples with the moral responsibility to treat the subjects with dignity and respect. The juxtaposition of "ordered rows" and "half-formed ghost" highlights this tension.

2. Emotional Detachment:

- The emotional detachment of the war photographer is a recurring theme. Despite being surrounded by the suffering and devastation of war, the photographer maintains a clinical distance. This emotional numbness is conveyed through the use of words like "spools of suffering" and the detached description of the photographs being "sorted into levels of exposure."

3. Voyeuristic Nature of Media:

- The poem critiques the voyeuristic nature of media consumption. The public, comfortably distanced from the realities of war, views the images as a form of entertainment or news without fully grasping the depth of the suffering. The "ordinary pain" experienced by the photographer contrasts with the casual indifference of the audience.

4. Symbolic Imagery:

- The poem employs powerful and symbolic imagery to convey the impact of war. The "foreign dust" on the negatives and the "blind" readers at home serve as metaphors for the detachment and ignorance that surround the subject. The use of "ghost" suggests the lingering trauma that transcends the physical images.

5. Role of the Photographer:

- Duffy explores the role of the war photographer as a mediator between the distant reality of war and the apathetic audience. The

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photographer is both an observer and a bearer of witness, capturing the silent suffering that remains hidden from the public eye.

6. Tone Shift:

- The tone of the poem undergoes a subtle shift, mirroring the photographer's internal conflict. It transitions from a detached and objective description of the photographer's work to a more introspective and emotional tone as he reflects on the contrast between the war zone and the home front.

7. Irony:

- The poem employs irony to emphasize the paradoxical nature of the photographer's situation. The contrast between the vivid, chaotic scenes of war and the mundane, silent darkroom work creates a poignant irony that highlights the disjunction between the two worlds.

In conclusion, "War Photographer" critically examines the moral complexities faced by those who document the horrors of war. Through its vivid imagery, ethical quandaries, and exploration of emotional detachment, the poem prompts readers to reflect on the role of the media, the responsibilities of the observer, and the challenges inherent in representing human suffering through