COMPARISON POETRY RESPONSE: POWERFUL IMAGES IN WAR PHOTOGRAPHER AND BLESSING

Powerful images are presented in War Photographer as it says ‘set out in ordered rows’ this creates an image of neatly organised rows and from this I can infer and create an image this line reflecting that of graves that are also ordered rows.

Another powerful image is that of ‘all flesh is grass’ as this creates an image of all the fallen people now laying once where the grass once stood as because of the war there is no grass just mud, but that mud is covered in dead bodies from the casualties of war and this is a powerful image because it shows what war was like and the amount of grass that once grew is replaced with dead bodies; this also creates an image of for every blade of grass is replaced with that of flesh and blood.

‘Fields that don’t explode beneath the feet’ This creates a powerful image of a memory that the people are used to walking across land mines and that it makes a change for the war photographer to walk across a field that cannot threaten your life; this is a powerful image because it suggests how dangerous the job of the war photographer is and what the people knew doing their job can happen to them. Despite this, they are still willing to get the photos of war to be able to show their country.

Powerful images are presented in ‘War Photographer’ as it says in the poem ‘children in a nightmare heat’ and this creates an image of a fire blazing in a little village of somewhere like that while children are running away from it. The word ‘nightmare’ suggests that the terrifying experience of what the fears are in the photographer and that of war being hell and giving the war photographer nightmares as only he can take pictures but not be able to do anything to help them.

Nevertheless ‘a half-formed ghost’ creates an image of the person developing the photos and the half-formed ghost is that of a person’s remembrance trapped in a photo and the phrase only ‘half-formed’ suggests that the war photographer is taking his time developing the photographs as if that was his little ritual for them and that is how he can remember them; this also suggests that it is also his way of being forgiven for not being able to do anything but takes a nightmare picture of the situation in front of him.

Although all of these phrases present powerful images, I believe that this phrase presents the most powerful image of them all: ‘a hundred agonies in black and white’. This creates an image of all of the painful memories and of the suffering of the war are all trapped in the black and white photographs that have been taken and the word ‘hundred’ suggests the extent and multitude of just how many people have been affected and brought pain by the war. I can also infer from this that their pain is also trapped in the photographs with them. The poet suggests that the photographer is bitter, knowing that the readers of the ‘Sunday supplement’ will only take a glance of his images and have a momentary effect on them between their ‘bath and pre-lunch beers’. The effects the images have had on the photographer are profound and will stay with him. The reader of the poem is made to consider how little we truly understand about what happens in other places around the world during wars.

Powerful images are also presented in ‘Blessing’. The poem is structured in four stanzas of unequal length, perhaps reflecting the small drips of water followed by the ‘gush’ of water from the broken pipe. The poem is about a ‘municipal’ pipe that bursts in an area where the land is so dry that skin ‘cracks like a pod’. This powerful simile provides the reader with an idea how dry the land is and how painful it must be to live somewhere where water is so scarce. The statement ‘There is never enough water’ delivers a stark message to the reader and makes the reader consider what this must be like, especially as the poet invites the reader to ‘imagine’ the situation. The effect this has on the reader is to be grateful for what we have and take for granted.

The poet uses sensory imagery. Aural imagery of ‘drip’, ‘splash’, ‘echo’ and ‘crash’ is onomatopoeic and presents the reader with strong images of how this gift of water gradually builds-up to the steady flow of water.

There is religious imagery in ‘Blessing’, which is similar to ‘War Photographer’. In ‘Blessing’ the poet refers to a ‘kindly god’, ‘a congregation’ and the ‘blessing’, as the title, of this most precious gift coming from a god. In ‘War Photographer’, religious imagery is used to compare the photographer’s actions with that of ‘a priest preparing to intone a mass’. The photographer is also preparing his photographs for a ‘Sunday supplement’, which suggests that they will be seen on what is often considered a religious day of the week.

Another similarity of the two poems is the use of colour imagery. In ‘Blessing’, the poet uses a range of colours which suggest wealth, such as ‘silver’, ‘brass’, ‘copper’, ‘aluminium’, ‘liquid sun’ , the plosive and alliterative ‘polished to perfection’ and towards the end, the ‘flashing light’. These powerful images suggest that the colours sparkle and are almost magical in the drops of water, having the effect that the reader can visualise the scene. In ‘War Photographer’, the colours are primary: ‘red’, ‘black’ and ‘white’, providing the reader with the reality of the situation and emphasising the horrors that the photographer has seen.

In ‘Blessing’ the poet describes the children who play and scream in the ‘liquid sun’ and a joyous image is created as the ‘blessing sings’ over their ‘small bones’. The broken pipe has provided the people with an exhilarating and happy moment. This is juxtaposed with the children in ‘War Photographer’ who are running in the ‘nightmare heat’, clearly the children here are scared and running for their lives from the effects of a bomb dropping on their homeland. This is a powerful image, just like the famous photograph of children running from a napalm attack during the war in Vietnam in the 1970s.

Both of the poems are full of powerful images, one shocking and sad, the other joyous. The poets have used a range of devices to present their ideas and these have an effect on the reader.