Comparison notes

Armitage presents a soldier whose account becomes a traumatic present. Duffy uses a controlled third-person perspective to show a photographer remembering suffering. Compare intrusive memories, guilt, the role of the witness and the distance between war and civilian life.

Remains

A dramatic monologue in colloquial free verse; a short final stanza concentrates the personal aftermath.

probably armed

Qualification: The threat was never completely certain.

possibly not

Counterweight: The alternative possibility keeps moral doubt alive.

blood-shadow

Compound metaphor: A physical trace becomes an image of persistent memory.

bloody hands

Guilt imagery: The ending makes the narrator’s own responsibility impossible to wash away.

Development and tone

Shooting — Conversational, then graphic: An apparently routine account becomes a vivid description of bodily destruction.

Return home — Intrusive and repetitive: The setting changes, but the killing returns through perception, sleep and dreams.

Final admission — Entrapped and guilty: The narrator’s focus narrows from the group to personal responsibility.

War Photographer

Four six-line stanzas with a recurring rhyme pattern; formal order contrasts with disturbing memories.

ordered rows

Visual arrangement: The darkroom imposes neatness on representations of suffering.

priest

Religious comparison: The work acquires the gravity of a ritual for the dead.

half-formed ghost

Metaphor: The photograph becomes an unsettling return of a person.

impassively

Adverb: The ending complicates whether apparent detachment protects or numbs him.

Development and tone

Darkroom — Solemn and controlled: Private processing resembles ritual, attempting to order what has been witnessed.

Emerging image — Distressed: A developing face draws the photographer back into an encounter with death.

Publication and departure — Bitterly detached: Editorial selection and brief public feeling limit the photograph’s power to change behaviour.