

Comparing the media
of scenes in journeys
end and black adder
goes forth essay sa...



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Journeys end is an awesome and eye-opening book to be set out as a play; it shows the viewer how devastating and demoralising the Great War was. R. C Sherriff, the author of Journeys End, was a brave man who was unfortunate enough to get wounded while serving in the army; he was an officer in the East Surrey regiment and was wounded in the battle of Passchendaele in 1917.

Although everyone knew of the Great War being horrific and shattering, R. C Sherriff wanted to dramatically emphasise the sheer demoralising effect the war had on the dignified soldiers that graciously stood on foreign ground and where forced to sacrifice their lives for the grater good of the world. Journeys End displays a vast amount of despair, as do the actors who play the soldiers. The dug out is exceptionally dark and incredibly undersized and so the sense of claustrophobia is immense. The camera angles through out the film shows this as you only ever notice the camera is in one place at a time; there are sometimes close up shots of characters or groups of characters in one frame.

If there is a character walking, the camera is stood still and pivots on one axis for the reason that if it was following the character it would give a sense of free movement and space which is the opposite of what it was like in the dug out. The dugout in Journeys End was lit up by a countless number of candles to show how eerie it was down there and even on a cloudy day it was still brighter outside as it always displayed a blinding light soaring through the frayed curtain in the door frame. The Black Adder series was and always will be a comedy appreciated by viewers of the 1980s and onwards.

Black Adder starring Rowan Atkinson was a comedy with four main time periods; "The Black Adder" set in the middle ages, "Black Adder II" set during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, "Black Adder the third" set during the late 18th Century and "Black Adder goes forth" set in 1917, which was obviously during the first world war. Since Black Adder is a comedy the situation is very different; the dugout is very bright, obviously stage lighting would have an effect on this, however there is a sense of security and hope in this dugout which contradicts the true nature of what the conditions were really like.

The BBC had a low budget for the series for Black Adder and so couldn't create the same effect that Journeys End had. Michael Simpson directed Journeys End but R. C Sherriff was the one who created the play. He repetitively mentions how the guns and booms of the front line are constant, "through the stillness comes the low rumble of distant guns", "... machine guns and the fevered spatter of rifle fire. R. C Sherriff was unfortunate to witness the dreadful sounds of the raging guns and he really wanted to emphasise this critical sense.

Black Adder didn't have constant sounds of guns or bombs in the episodes they made. They did however, consider the jaded atmosphere of the dugouts; they sat and talked for quite a while about how their life was back home and how things changed during the war, Hugh Laurie who played as one of the soldiers in the dugout with Rowan Atkinson, reminisced about his old club, he discovers that he is the last survivor and that they all died years ago.

This scene is very important as it shows the viewer that in world war one there was nothing else to do; Black Adder couldn't attend to anyone or set out on one of his cunning plans because they just simply couldn't and that's why this scene is an important one as it shows the average soldiers' life in panorama. The day after Stanhope and Raleigh had their quarrel, Stanhope's emotions toward Raleigh changed very much so; he wouldn't look at Raleigh at all in the morning, and was very withdrawn from him.

The camera frame was very close to Stanhope's face when he was at the table telling Raleigh to go up, this is so that it seems that Stanhope's emotions have maximized and have inflated. The close up of his face really brings out the stress and frustration that he had bottled up. He soon falls back to his child like state when something tragic happens to Raleigh and regrets all that he has done. One of the soldiers in Journeys End tries to fake neuralgia to get sent home and away from the horrific noises that drove so many soldiers to insanity.

He keeps begging Stanhope to leave and go to the hospital; this is what many people used to do whilst on the front line. It was that or getting shot; there was no other way to get out. Black Adder shows this also, but in a different technique; some soldiers tried to fake becoming crazy from all of the noises, in fact some of them did turn crazy and were sometimes reduced to simple flesh, holding valuable weapons and were shot to give the equipment to fresh new soldiers. Black Adder had the idea of sticking pencils up his nose and putting underwear around his head so that he would be considered crazy and sent back.

Just as General Melchett was about to enter the dugout he mentions that he would not send him back if he had pencils up his nose and underwear around his head, this was because there were so many soldiers trying the same tricks it got too predictable. When Black Adder calls in a favour (which turned out to be useless), is when there is a lot of satirical value in the film; it showed the captain “ playing” with the toy soldiers which actually represented hundreds of lives involved all over the war. It showed him scooping up the soldiers and discarding them as if they were nothing but toys.

He quite happily scoops them up and throws them over his shoulder. Although this is comedy, to the viewers it does show how the captains and commanding officers looked at the soldiers through their own eyes. Towards the end of Journey End, Raleigh gets seriously injured and is lying on a bed with Stanhope standing over him regressing back to his child like stage but still taking the role as the parent. The camera is to the side of them both almost causing a silhouette of Raleigh’s body, making him look dark and so very close to death, while Stanhope who is over him, his vibrant with colour from the candle light, is so full of life.

As he stands over him Raleigh is acting very childlike, as he wants Stanhope by his side as anyone would. Stanhope refers to Raleigh as Jimmy, although he wants to be very close to him he tries to detach from Raleigh by calling him a different name, Stanhope can’t handle Raleigh’s death, not with the terms that they were on. He tries to distance himself a little so that he won’t get emotionally hurt. In Black Adder they are given the signal to go “ over the top”. Baldrick spots a splinter in the ladder and has “ a cunning plan”.
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Although Black Adder knows what he can quite easily do, he refuses it and upholds his post as a soldier and goes over the top anyway. This really does show how noble the soldiers were in the great war. As Raleigh dies Stanhope gets angry and all hell breaks loose on the machine gun. I think this spoils the scene in *Journeys End*, as it was not written in the play. The ending is very sad as it shows a bomb destroying the dugout along with the soldiers, leaving a barren landscape full of debris with Raleigh's body covered in soil and wooden beams.

This ending shows death and destruction and really shows how bad the war was. Black Adder too had a sad ending as it shows them running over the top; the movement slows down and the Black Adder music is played on a grand piano very slowly for a grand ending. Eventually the music dies off leaving a barren landscape. At the very end though it shows a poppy field where the battlefield was, to show that there is still hope; there is also bird song in the background to indicate peace.