

Language and Voice p98 – 103

Throughout p98-103 and the rest of the play in general, many abbreviations and slang references are used among the characters, which is rather ironic as men like Osborne and Stanhope are supposed to be of relatively high authority, yet they simply cannot be bothered to speak in full sentences despite the fact they have loads of time in the bunker whilst waiting for battle. “I *ain’t bin* up in this part of the front line. Don’t want to get *lorst*” is a line spoken by Mason, the chef, and this shows improper formality, despite the fact that he should be setting a good example to the other characters as he is a person for them to look up to. He keeps them alive “day-in and day-out,” by cooking them food etc.

Additionally and understandably, when Raleigh is dying, he seems to be rather laconic and when he does speak he does so in parataxis, showing his confusion and lack of understanding. A young soldier that has practically “just joined” the army and that is shot straight away is going to be rather confused due to the shock factor of the blow and also the psychological trauma that he has most likely already experienced. On the other hand however, Stanhope speaks tersely, to try and take Raleigh’s mind off of his injury, and to keep him distracted by taking a motherly role of caring and looking after him.

Finally, in these few pages we see various understatements which consistently undermine the severity of the bombs, rifle fire and injuries of the characters and their opposition. For example, at the beginning of this scene we see Stanhope and Elton understating the importance of Corporal Ross’ death, asking if it was “only him” that had died, and with a response of “Yes, that’s all sir.” This suggests that the soldiers have lost recognition for the importance of their comrades, and instead focus on food and drink such as “the lovely smell of bacon.”

Juxtaposing this; the stage directions casted in these few pages forecast future events, showing signs of hope, despair and death through similes and mostly metaphors. We hear of the *flying fragments of shell* and the *crack of the rifle grenades which seem to be getting closer*, which suggests that the inevitable death is indeed approaching the men, and that it is not long now until a few of them are killed.

Furthermore, near to the end of the entire play a stage direction depicts the *still and very quiet* dugout, alongside the *stars which begin to go*, which in contrast to the *warm beam of sunlight* which suggested hope in the opening scenes of the play, suggests the loss of the war and the men which had been fighting in it. These directions paint an image in the audience’s head, consistently hinting to them of the possible events / outcomes that there is to come.