

ENGLISH STANDARD

The Global Village

In a world pervaded by information technologies and mass media, an individual's attitudes and beliefs are potentially challenged by a much larger audience than in previous decades. This can lead to open conflict or support, creating a unique experience in the global village. The characters in Nick Enright's play 'A Man With Five Children' and an analysis of media misrepresentation in the feature article 'A Cry in the Night' by Paul Toohey, are examples which highlight the impacts of the global village. The concepts of manipulation, instant stardom and loss of anonymity are presented in each text as influences on an individual's ideologies.

As a consequence of living in the global village, some individuals inevitably fall victim to media influence as their beliefs are misrepresented by cunning editing aficionados. Once captured, these dogmas are rapidly circulated for society's judgement. In Enright's play, Gerry is a metaphor for the media, editing footage to create the story he wants; "She looks directly at the camera. GERRY rewinds and edits. Then the footage ends." These stage directions illustrate the manipulation of an individual's ideas, drawing a parallel between Gerry and our voyeuristic media. A similar misrepresentation is found in Toohey's assessment of the 'Chamberlain Case' in "A Cry in the Night". The popular press circulated false test results indicating the discovery of Azaria's blood which Toohey claims supported 'the view' adopted by "bad primitive science" to put Lindy behind bars and turn the Australian public against her. The word 'primitive' has negative connotations indicating his abhorrence of the situation while Toohey's comical personification of this media driven manipulation demonstrates the negative impact on Lindy's experience due to rampant criticism from the public. After becoming a controversial issue, the 'Azaria Case' promoted Lindy Chamberlain to an instant celebrity, for all the wrong reasons.

Attitudes can be changed through the exaltation of individuals who are challenged beneficially or harmfully by the media and the public due to their rapid ascension to 'celebrity status'. A tragic example of this is Enright's character, Zoe, who claims "Strangers stop me in the street. 'You're one of those five kids. You're the quiet one'. I say, no, I'm the dumb one." The inclusive language in the repetition of the word 'you're' and 'one' indicate her loss of individuality and privacy, while the word 'strangers' carries negative undertones leaving Zoe feeling as though she has been stereotyped as 'the dumb one' by Gerry. The public also stereotype those in the public eye as is the case with Roger, nicknamed the 'Maserati Kid', who is metaphorically 'sick of being a national joke' as he is 'the one the media label'. The pressure put on him by Gerry and the media is communicated throughout the play TECHNIQUE+QUOTE, which led to his disappearance. Similarly, Toohey reveals the immense pressure placed on Lindy. She 'rubbed people up the wrong way' which eventually led to 'a genuine, widely held belief that she did it'. This cliché pun, expressed in high modality colloquial language, indicates that Lindy's experience in the global village was one of prejudice and public vilification. However, instant stardom is also lucrative. Enright's character, Cam, becomes a national star full of bravado. When Zoe does not recognise him in a club he states "everyone fucken knows me" and Gerry suggests she can "shag a living legend". These invective colloquialisms indicate the positive experiences that Cam has had as a part of the global village. An individual's identity can be completely altered or grounded by a nation of judgement filled with either contempt or respect.

Age and changing circumstances can affect attitudes to personal privacy or anonymity, but the media can ignore this in their quest for scoops and profit. Enright's children are exposed to global scrutiny which at age seven can be an enjoyable novelty; Susannah relishes the opportunity to show off her precocious knowledge and Roger is keen because "We'll be able to see ourselves on television". But as the children reach early adulthood, they become reluctant to expose their thoughts and actions to the judgement of a global audience. Susannah says "It's too ... Can we stop this now?" and Jessie's scepticism with the project is revealed with "It's a game we got into before we knew the rules". The Chamberlain Case should have been reported as any other, guaranteeing

the accused the presumption of innocence and a fair trial. Toohey's retrospective assessment of the case and third person perspective, allow him to be much more objective and able to see the negative effects of the media. As he explains, unusual aspects of the case, such as the dingo, the setting and religious issues, sensationalised by the media with bias and misinformation, pandered to more gullible elements of the audience, thus making it a trial by media.

The global village creates a modern, virtual space for people from all walks of life to participate in the degradation or enhancement of an individual's beliefs and attitudes. Enright's play and Toohey's article serve as warnings about many situations scrutinised by the public, as a result of media manipulation and acclamation of individuals. For some, the global village can be a harsh environment in which beliefs are challenged, but for others, it can provide a gateway to nurture ideologies, making them idols of modern society. Either way, our sensationalist environment has developed a unique experience for all who are drawn into its clutches, be it news media, social media, telecommunications or the internet.