

"murmuring judges"  
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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

"Murmuring Judges" is a story of a young family man "Gerard McKinnon" who has turned to crime to survive, but has been caught and convicted.

The Play revolves around the roles the police, judicial system and prisons play in his life at this time as well as showing us some of the inner working of these institutions and the politics that goes on within them. The writer presents some valid criticisms against how the criminal justice system works. Through a combination of characters on stage "David Hare" reveals how brittle the judicial system is and how it relies on prisons to feed the system so that the profession can be paid. "Gerard" particularly points this out, what the judges do at work has no effect on them but can change one person's life in an instant.

It shows that sometimes innocent people can be imprisoned for years, for a crime that they did not commit. GERRARD: "These men, every one of them silver haired, judicious, informed, they will go home to their wives, to wine in fine glasses and the gossip of the bar, they will walk the streets and complain about their lives, and I. and I..

." The writer shows the lack of empathy shown from the barristers and lawyers and in this instance, prejudice because of this person's heritage. Gerard is imprisoned because he's young, Irish and didn't want his family to starve. GERRARD: "One big wave and I'm gone. Every week I just survive and no more.

Then Barbara was pregnant again. I was asked to do this job; I thought okay, just the once. What every one needs is a lump of money. And the waves will be up to my chest." The Police are shown to be very over worked and under

paid, being pressured into achieving the targets set for them and looking good to the public.

JIMMY: " Some pen -pusher comes down from upstairs and, says, look, the local press are on to us, we need a nice clear up graph. David Hare portrays the prison itself as a Victorian, out of date institution in which the prisoners have to share cells with two or sometimes three other convicts. The writer shows the over crowding state the prisons are in using very clear language, GERRARD: " They took me to Pentonville. But then it turned out there wasn't any room.

" BECKETT: " There's no room here, we've put you on D-wing. We shouldn't really. It's for lifers. But it's that or sleeping in the chapel". I found the female characters in the play " Irina" and " Sandra" to have very poignant roles. David Hare has used these characters to show the sympathetic, compassionate side of the law.

" Sandra" who is a police officer is having a relationship with " Barry" who is " Gerard's" arresting officer. She strongly suspects that something underhandAccess English StudiesUnit 4 bProse-Modern PlayEmma Marshallhas taken place during the arrest and voices her opinions to him. She believes that " Gerard" was new into crime and can not understand why, as his first offence he receives such a long sentence. She thinks of " Gerard" as different but " Barry's" reply to this is, BARRY: " Oh, what, and the nice ones shouldn't go down?" BARRY: " Oh, leave it out, Sandra, you're not just out of Hendon...

" This is a patronising reply and throughout the play you can see the sexist remarks and inner politics of the Police force." Irina" is also discriminated because of her sex in the Judiciary system but also she is just out of University and quite idealistic about how she believes things should work. The character " Sir Peter" is shown in a very sexist light and you get the impression that he does not take her seriously as a lawyer because of her sex. He feels it is her duty to accompany him to functions in which they will be seen together, which will reflect good on him as not only is she a woman but black as well.

This not only shows the chauvinistic side of the Judiciary system but also a deeply bigoted side. " Irina" feels uncomfortable with being told what to do in her private time but is underhandedly threatened " Woody" who is " Sir Peter's" aid. WOODY: " The last new girl we had here. Very bright. From Harvard..

. She said no... But look at it the other way. Where is she now?" In some ways I find Hare's use of these characters in the play as quite chauvinistic on his behalf as why is it the women have to be the compassionate sensitive people in the play, and the men are all seen as hard faced with no conscience.

The police force or ' club' is seen as a macho organisation in which it is acceptable and necessary at times to take matters into their own hands. In this instance " Barry" knows the two other criminals that were caught with " Gerard" from previous crimes that he was not able to prosecute them for. So this time to make sure he gets his arrest, the original crime being a robbery,

he admits to " Sandra" (under duress) that he planted some semtex in the offenders flat because they were, BARRY: "...What's more, he was, sort of, well, what's the word? He was kind of Irish as well.

" This conveys some of the stereo typical bigotry that we saw earlier in the play but through the eyes of the police. David Hare displays a more sympathetic side to them showing the difficult job the police have to do every day. BARRY: "...

a filthy thankless job." The police in the play are seen as worn down by the system and the bureaucracy of all the paper work that has to be done after every arrest, over concerned with reaching arrest quotas and keeping good public relations. It is as if in some cases they have given up and resigned themselves to how they are seen and treated. In one instance the desk Sergeant talks about how he is used to being sworn at and being called a " tosser", although now he talks the same way to his " customers".

The police are seen as victims themselves. The portrayal of the police force also shows the class difference and where they come in the pecking order, you have your common criminals, then the police and finally the upper echelon of the Judges, Barristers and Access English Studies Unit 4 bProse- Modern Play Emma Marshall Lawyers. " Irina" try's to empathise with " Barry" while at the same time telling him she knows what he has done, this does not go down well. Showing how passionate he feels about the injustices against the police, his tone becomes quite violent and venomous when he says to her, IRINA: " I do understand how policemen's minds work." BARRY: " Do you? From what? From your experience? From your deep experience of

doing a filthy, thankless job? You really know? Oh, do you? When was the last time anyone was sick on your shoes?" The portrayal of the prison shows the lack of funding available, plus the feeling of the lack of interest shown in the service.

It suggests that the authorities don't care about the standards and once they have been sentenced and in prison, all is then forgotten, they are history. There is a violent scene in which "Gerard" is assaulted in the showers so he will keep quiet, it is believed this 'message' has come from "Barry" to remind him who is in control and that he should just keep his head down and do his time. The fact that this can happen shows the out of control behaviour of the prison as a whole. Even where there are opportunities for the prisoners to better themselves they can not continue to better themselves for long.

GERARD: " I tried to take a course, you know. There's a bookbinding course. I thought, that's interesting work. It takes four weeks. You learn how to do it. But then you can't practice until you get out.

I thought, yeah, that's it: they give you something, and then take it away.