

"The National Anthem" is an uncomfortable episode to watch due to several issues that were explored: the effects of public opinion, national security and sensationalization within the news. However, within this episode, all these issues coagulate to express a deeper, base fear of the fragility of authority. That is, not only the fragility of the *physical* authority leaders which exist within society, but the sense of *moral* order and authority. The disruption of both these physical and nonphysical entities causes distress within the viewer as the plot unfolds to show that perhaps neither of them matter. Even more uncomfortable is the fact that we, as a public, already know this on some level. The public within the episode take part in the prime minister's act, being both the primary judge and jury on whether it is committed, and find enjoyment within these roles, making the event more of a spectacle than it inherently is. The climax of uncomfortability within the episode occurs within the last moments when the prime minister and his wife, a year after the event, return home from several public appearances, where they had seemed happy and close to one another, to show the reality of their relationship and the long lasting consequences of his actions.

This episode expresses a point about the fluidity of morals, and how morals are easily obscured by the opinions of the media and those around us. While within the episode, a very difficult moral dilemma was proposed, the ethics of it became even more muddled when the situation was communicated by the media and public opinion became involved. The focus turned to public opinion, specifically, keeping public approval. The situation became a spectacle and thus the reaction to it was one that would be had towards entertainment. Often in society, the outrageous and controversial are processed as entertainment with little regard for the thoughts and feelings of those involved. While the bulk of the moral "weight" is placed upon the prime minister, the public in this episode neglects their share of it, which often occurs in real life as well. The events which take place in the episode also present the notion that as a society, we often value entertainment over the wellbeing of others.

A scene I believe is very revealing of the prominent messages of this episode, and more than worthy of analysis, is the last five minutes, in which Prime Minister Callow and his wife, along with Susannah, are shown in the news a year after the event, appearing to be better than ever. The prime minister stands by his wife, and they look happy together, however, when they return home and retreat from the public eye, the true coldness she now holds towards him comes forth. This shows the audience that while the public had its fun witnessing the spectacle, there were more dimensions to it than were visible- and that it wasn't just a spectacle, but rather one of the most horrific events of his life. Often in real life, people are quick to gawk over the tragedies of celebrities or even those they personally know through social media with little regard for the true experience the person involved is having. As a public, the long term outcomes of these situations are often taken completely out of the realm of consideration, and thus, there is little sympathy given.