



The Tension Between Social Conformity and Individual Freedom: a Study of John Arden's Live like Pigs

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords : Marginalisation,
Modernisation, Displacement,
Division, Resistance, Reform

Received : 21 November

Revised : 23 December

Accepted: 23 January

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the tension between social conformity and individual freedom in John Arden's *Live Like Pigs* (1958). The play critiques rigid social structures in post-war Britain. It highlights society's resistance to those who challenge conventional norms. The purpose of this research is to examine how Arden dramatizes the conflict between authority and personal autonomy. The focus is on the Sawney family. Their nomadic lifestyle and rejection of middle-class values put them at odds with mainstream society. Arden questions whether individuals can exercise true freedom in a system that enforces uniformity. This study uses a close reading of the play's text. It analyses themes, character interactions, and dramatic techniques. Secondary literature provides context on Arden's political and theatrical influences. The study examines how dialogue, setting, and staging reflect power struggles between conformity and resistance. The historical and social backdrop of the play is also considered. Post-war housing policies and class divisions shaped these conflicts. The analysis reveals that Arden presents social conformity as both control and exclusion. The Sawneys seek autonomy but face societal pressure and institutional intervention. Their way of life is regulated against their will. The play also critiques absolute freedom. It shows how fragile independence is within a rigid social order. The conclusion highlights Arden's broader argument. True freedom remains elusive in a society that values stability over individual agency. The play reinforces his critique of post-war social policies. These policies imposed order at the cost of diversity and self-determination.

INTRODUCTION

John Arden's *Live Like Pigs* (1958) is a play about the conflict between social conformity and individual freedom. It explores how society enforces rigid rules and punishes those who challenge them. The play is set in a post-war British housing estate, where working-class families live under strict social expectations. The Sawney family, who reject these norms, find themselves in conflict with their neighbors and authorities. Their struggles highlight the tension between personal autonomy and societal control. Arden raises important questions about freedom, identity, and the cost of nonconformity. His play challenges audiences to consider whether true independence is possible in a structured society.

This study examines how *Live Like Pigs* portrays the clash between institutional authority and personal autonomy. It seeks to understand how Arden presents social conformity as both a stabilizing force and a form of oppression. The research asks several key questions: How does Arden depict the pressures of social conformity? To what extent can individuals resist these pressures? Does the play suggest that true freedom is possible, or is it always restricted by society? Through these questions, the study aims to uncover the deeper meanings behind Arden's critique of post-war Britain.

The play also raises concerns about class divisions and housing policies. The Sawneys' arrival in the estate disrupts the existing social order. Their way of life, which values personal freedom over societal expectations, threatens the structured world of their neighbors. This conflict represents a larger struggle within post-war British society. Arden's work highlights how institutions regulate behavior to maintain control. This study investigates how *Live Like Pigs* dramatizes these tensions and what it reveals about the limits of personal freedom.

This study has three main objectives: To analyze the conflict between social norms and personal independence. Arden presents the Sawneys as a family that refuses to conform. Their rejection of middle-class values puts them in direct opposition to their neighbors. The study explores how this conflict unfolds and what it suggests about the nature of social control. To examine Arden's critique of post-war British policies, housing policies played a major role in shaping working-class life. The study looks at how Arden reflects these policies in his play. It considers how forced relocation and institutional rules affect the characters and their freedoms. To explore the dramatic techniques Arden uses to convey his themes. The play's dialogue, setting, and character dynamics all contribute to its message. This study examines how these elements work together to create a powerful critique of conformity and oppression. By addressing these objectives, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of *Live Like Pigs* and its social significance.

This research is important for several reasons. First, it contributes to discussions about class and social control in British drama. Arden was a playwright deeply concerned with social justice. His work reflects the struggles of the working class in post-war Britain. By analysing *Live Like Pigs*, this study sheds light on how theatre can be used to challenge dominant ideologies. Second, the play remains relevant today. Issues of social conformity and individual

freedom continue to shape modern societies. Many communities still struggle with rigid expectations and exclusionary policies. The play's themes resonate with contemporary debates on housing, class, and personal autonomy. Understanding Arden's critique helps us reflect on similar challenges in today's world. Finally, this study highlights Arden's unique approach to storytelling. His plays often blur the lines between realism and symbolism. *Live Like Pigs* uses exaggerated conflicts to expose deeper social truths. By studying his dramatic techniques, this research provides insight into how theatre can be both political and artistic.

Providing an Overview

This study is structured into several sections. First, it explores Arden's portrayal of social conformity in *Live Like Pigs*. It examines how characters enforce societal norms and punish those who resist them. The section looks at how the Sawneys' nonconformity disrupts the community and leads to conflict. Second, it provides historical and social context. It discusses the impact of post-war housing policies on working-class families. The study considers how forced relocations and strict social rules shaped the conflicts in Arden's play. Understanding this background helps explain why the tensions in *Live Like Pigs* are so intense. Third, the study analyses Arden's dramatic techniques. It looks at how dialogue, setting, and character interactions reinforce the play's themes. The analysis shows how Arden uses theatrical tools to highlight the struggles between freedom and control. Finally, the study concludes by reflecting on the play's message. It argues that *Live Like Pigs* presents freedom as fragile and often unattainable. The play suggests that social structures are designed to limit personal autonomy. Arden's work serves as a critique of a system that prioritizes order over individuality.

An attempt has been made to focus on the struggle between social conformity and individual freedom. It established the research problem by questioning how Arden portrays this conflict. It stated the study's objectives, highlighting its focus on social norms, housing policies, and dramatic techniques. It also explained the significance of the research, emphasizing its relevance to both historical and modern discussions. Finally, it provided an overview of the study's structure.

Arden's *Live Like Pigs* is a play that challenges audiences to rethink the limits of freedom in society. It exposes how institutions regulate behavior and punish those who resist control. By studying this play, we gain a deeper understanding of how theatre can critique social structures and inspire conversations about change.

LITERATURE RIVIEW

John Arden's *Live Like Pigs* (1958) is a play about the conflict between social conformity and individual freedom. It explores how society enforces rigid rules and punishes those who challenge them. The play is set in a post-war British housing estate, where working-class families live under strict social expectations. The Sawney family, who reject these norms, find themselves in conflict with their neighbors and authorities. Their struggles highlight the tension between

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METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to examine the tension between social conformity and individual freedom in John Arden's *Live Like Pigs*. The research is based on textual analysis, which involves a close reading of the play's themes, character dynamics, and dramatic techniques. Additionally, the study draws on secondary sources, including scholarly articles and critical essays, to provide historical and theoretical context. A qualitative approach is most suitable for this study as it focuses on interpreting meanings, themes, and social commentary embedded within the play. Since *Live Like Pigs* critiques societal structures, a qualitative analysis allows for a deeper understanding of how Arden constructs and conveys these tensions through dramatic elements.

This Study Relies on Two Primary Sources of Data:

1. **Primary Text Analysis:** The main text analysed is *Live Like Pigs*, with a focus on its narrative structure, dialogues, character interactions, and dramatic staging. Key scenes that highlight the conflict between conformity and freedom are examined in detail. The play's language, setting, and symbolism are also analysed to determine how Arden critiques social control.
2. **Secondary Sources:** To support the analysis, the study engages with scholarly literature on John Arden, post-war British theatre, and social conformity theories. Books, journal articles, and critical essays provide insights into Arden's political influences, his approach to playwriting, and the historical context of *Live Like Pigs*. This research also considers discussions on class struggles, housing policies, and institutional control in post-war Britain.

The Study Applies the Following Analytical Frameworks:

1. **Thematic Analysis:** Themes of social control, individual autonomy, class conflict, and institutional oppression are identified and examined. The study explores how these themes are developed through character interactions and dramatic structure.
2. **Contextual Analysis:** The historical and social background of post-war Britain, particularly housing policies and class tensions, is considered. This helps situate *Live Like Pigs* within its broader societal framework.
3. **Dramatic Technique Analysis:** The play's use of dialogue, setting, character development, and stage directions is analysed. This helps understand how Arden reinforces his social critique through theatrical form.

While this study provides a detailed analysis of *Live Like Pigs*, it has some limitations. First, the research is primarily focused on textual interpretation rather than audience reception. The ways in which different audiences have responded to the play over time are not extensively covered. Second, while secondary sources provide historical context, the study does not include firsthand archival research or interviews with theatre practitioners.

By using textual analysis, thematic exploration, and historical context, this study aims to uncover the deeper messages in *Live Like Pigs*. Through its qualitative approach, the research highlights how Arden critiques social conformity and the challenges of individual freedom in a structured society.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Live Like Pigs (1958) uses political theatre techniques to critique post-war social reforms in Britain. The play focuses on the working-class experience during a time of modernization. It explores issues like housing policies, forced relocation, and the breakdown of traditional community bonds. Arden critiques state interventions that aimed to improve the lives of the poor but caused unexpected harm. These policies, though well-meaning, often led to alienation and a loss of identity. Arden's *Live Like Pigs* "could generally be described as "civic" in nature; his themes are for the most part political, and his protagonists are frequently involved with the machinations of government" (Arden:1978, 48). The story centers on the Sawney family, an itinerant working-class group. They are forcibly

relocated to a suburban housing estate. Their arrival sparks conflict with their new neighbors, exposing prejudice and dislocation. Through this clash, Arden highlights the struggles of marginalized communities. He shows how housing policies prioritized physical infrastructure over social and emotional needs. The play critiques rigid urban designs and strict social expectations. These structures stifle individuality and destroy communal ties. Arden reveals the human cost of modernization.

Immediately after *The Hunting of the Mongrel Fox*, the controversy over housing gypsies and travelling people in Galway recurred, and the Theatre Workshop decided to explore this, too. Arden and D'Arcy had become involved in these matters ... *Live Like Pigs*, centred on the problems of sedentary and travelling people living side by side (*Modern British Playwriting: The 1960s* 164). He exposes the failure of post-war Britain's vision of progress. Instead of uniting communities, these reforms often deepened class divisions and created tension. By focusing on the displaced, Arden gives voice to those overlooked in the pursuit of modernization.

Historical Context

As far as the historical context of the play is concerned, it is set in the immediate post-war period: a time when Britain was grappling with a severe housing shortage. The widespread bombing during World War II had destroyed vast areas of urban housing, leaving thousands homeless. Coupled with a growing population, this created an acute crisis that demanded urgent action. In response, the government launched large-scale slum clearance programs and ambitious housing schemes aimed at modernizing the urban landscape. Influenced by modernist architectural ideals, these developments often featured high-rise tower blocks and uniform layouts that prioritized efficiency and functionality over the social and emotional needs of residents. While these policies were intended to eradicate poverty and improve public health, they frequently overlooked the complex social fabric of the working-class neighbourhoods they replaced. Traditional communities were often built around shared spaces such as courtyards, local pubs, corner shops, and tight-knit networks of neighbours, who provided mutual support. These spaces fostered a strong sense of identity, belonging, and social cohesion. However, relocation to high-rise flats or suburban estates disrupted these bonds. The new environments, though clean, spacious, and more hygienic, lacked the communal spirit that defined the lives of those who lived in older neighbourhoods.

For many working-class families, these relocations represented not progress but a profound loss of identity. The sterile and impersonal design of the new estates often created feelings of isolation and alienation. Residents who had once thrived in close-knit communities now found themselves disconnected from their neighbors, with few opportunities for social interaction. As a result, many struggled to adapt, and the disconnection between architectural ideals and lived experience became increasingly apparent. While post-war housing policies achieved significant improvements in living standards, they also underscored the importance of designing environments that respect and nurture the human need for community and belonging.

Arden's *Live Like Pigs* explores the tension between social conformity and individual freedom through the clash of lifestyles in a post-war British council estate. The idea for the play came from a short news story Arden read in *The Barnsley Chronicle*, his local hometown newspaper. Arden's father often sent him clippings from the paper, and one story stood out to him. It was a police-court report about an unusual and amusing incident, describing how a group of seemingly respectable people caused a surprising amount of chaos and conflict.

This happened because some individuals refused to follow societal rules or behave according to the norms. Arden used this incident as a starting point to explore human nature. Edward Albert considers the play "a Brechtian survey of behaviour by means of words, music, song, and symbolism" (*History of English Literature* 611). He was fascinated by how deeply ingrained cultural attitudes, such as the need to conform or impose order, could lead to tension and even violence. This theme became central to *Live Like Pigs*, a play that examines the clash between different ways of life and challenges the idea of what it means to live 'correctly'. Arden was captivated by how quickly these 'decent' people lost their composure and erupted into conflict. The contrast between their outward respectability and their sudden outbursts of anger sparked Arden's imagination and became the foundation for the play. As a result of this, Stephen Lacey calls Arden a "predominantly naturalist in conception, locating it within a context of Working-Class realism. This was not entirely fanciful, as the play bears some of the birthmarks of social realism ... (Stephen: 1995, 108).

Secondly, in an interview, Arden describes how his taking a house in North Country along with his wife D'Arcy, led to the creation of this play. In this residence, his personal experiences with a specific social group directly influenced the creation of *Live Like Pigs*. Arden and his wife lived in a small North Yorkshire town, where they observed the unique lifestyle of a settled group of formerly nomadic people. These individuals, originally part of traveling communities, had transitioned into a more fixed way of life. Arden notes that his neighbours' way of life closely resembled the Sawney family in the play. "They have their own very strict codes. The ones I had written about in *Live Like Pigs* were rather wilder, but the same sort of outcasts" (1966, 44). The Sawneys reflect this marginalized, self-contained, and culturally distinct group that resists societal norms. Arden's personal observations of his neighbors gave him an intimate understanding of the tensions between settled communities and outsiders, a theme central to the play. Arden describes the moment for writing the play, "*Live Like Pigs*, it was an account in a North Country English newspaper of a riot in a low-cost housing development area" that motivated him to write. (1966, 46)

Arden explores the evolution of human society through three families: Blackmouth, Daffodil, and OldCroaker. Each family symbolizes a distinct stage of development. Blackmouth represents the most primal state of humanity. They embody an isolated existence, where survival depends on raw instinct. The Sawneys represent an early, primitive form of social organization. They are bound by blood and ruled by a patriarch, symbolizing a basic, family-based society. This structure provides safety and a sense of belonging. Their values emerge through the dialogue between Sailor and Rachel, where sacrifice, hard work, and loyalty

define their way of life. The Jacksons are their neighbors in the council estate. The Jackson family represents the working-class aspiration for stability and order. They adhere to societal norms and are visibly uncomfortable with the Sawneys' perceived disruption. Their fear of disorder highlights the pressures of conformity in post-war British society and the alienation of those who deviate. Through the interactions of these families and characters, Arden critiques the dehumanizing aspects of modernity, particularly the post-war social housing policies and welfare state interventions, which often failed to account for the diversity of human needs and lifestyles. The play questions whether societal "progress" truly improves the human condition or merely replaces one set of constraints with another. Stuart Hall says: "Arden made a stubborn plea on behalf of a Gipsy family which refused to be housed, fed, organised, put on the electoral roll, inspected by the welfare officer and generally bugged about in a new housing estate" (Review of Serjeant Musgrave's Dance by John Arden 76). It's a vivid reflection of Arden's broader concerns about social engineering and its impact on individuality and community cohesion.

The play begins with the dramatic uprooting of a family of Blackmouth Gypsies, the Sawneys. The Sawney family, a group of traveling folk, is being forcibly relocated from their dilapidated tramcar into a house on a council estate. The family consists of Sailor, the 70-year-old patriarch; Big Rachel, a formidable 40-year-old. Lacey calls the play "a semi-documentary account of the effect of a group of gypsies on a northern housing estate ..." (British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in its Context 1956-1965 72). The family is displaced from their caravan home, which is destroyed without warning. The opening song, contrarily, recommends living freely as a basic right for the Britishers: "O England was a free country/ So free beyond a doubt ...so you make your true own choice of it? Hey?" (36-37). The image of their wrecked home sets the tone for the play's exploration of forced conformity. Stripped of their way of life, the Sawneys are left with no choice but to move into a council estate. When Rachel communicates this to an official, "You put us" here and the official responds "where did you get all this fat nonsense from" (Live Like Pigs 106)

This relocation is not an act of kindness but a calculated attempt by the authorities to impose order and control on a marginalized group. Arden shows how institutions or systems of power operate according to standardized rules and procedures, devoid of personal consideration or empathy. Arden points out that individuals or communities opposing such authority have limited tools at their disposal. "Against the impersonal functioning of authority, which does have on its side, however, a clarity of purpose and a basis in reasonableness, their only weapons are an ability to side-step the rules and the heavy formless strength of their refusal to be assimilated." (Gilman: 1966,58) This tension is a recurring theme in Arden's critique of post-war policies, particularly in the 1950s, where housing and social reforms sought to impose standardized solutions on diverse working-class communities, ignoring their unique needs and identities. The council estate is a stark contrast to the free and open lifestyle the Sawneys once knew. The "gypsy family is hounded out of a council estate by working class 'conformists' because their desire to the themselves' conflicts with the accepted behavior of the society

they find themselves in" (Farley: 1962, 122). Its rigid layout and identical houses represent post-war Britain's drive to rebuild society. This rebuilding came with a cost—sacrificing individuality and diversity. For the Sawneys, the estate is not a home. It is a cage. The monotony of the estate suffocates them, stifling their spirit and freedom.

The Sawneys are led by the resilient and outspoken Mrs. Sawney. Arden uses her to According to Bill McDonnell the play "explores the consequences when a family of gypsies is placed in a council-house next door to the 'respectable' Jacksons" (John Arden). She is a matriarch who refuses to bow to authority. Her character embodies strength, defiance, and loyalty to her family's way of life. Her stance is presented in a song: "But if you want your freedom kept / You need to fight and strive" (Live Like Pigs 105). Yet, her strong-willed nature soon makes her a target. The neighbors, particularly the Jackson family, view Mrs. Sawney with suspicion. Her refusal to conform to the estate's conservative values unsettles them. Mrs. Sawney remains defiant throughout these confrontations. She refuses to apologize for her family's behavior. Instead, she questions the neighbours' rigid adherence to rules. "Why don't you folks leave us alone? We didn't come here cos we wanted; but now we are here you ought to leave us" (Live Like Pigs 113). Mrs. Sawney challenges the estate's unwritten rules at every turn. She refuses to silence her family's laughter. She questions the intrusive policies enforced by council officials. When neighbours complain about the Sawneys' "uncivilized" behavior, she fights back with sharp wit and unflinching honesty. Her defiance earns her grudging respect from some but deepens the animosity of others. In one particularly striking scene, she confronts Mr. Jackson directly. She accuses him of hiding his unhappiness behind his judgmental attitude. Her words cut deep, forcing Mr. Jackson to confront his own dissatisfaction with his life. Yet, rather than admit his vulnerabilities, he doubles down on his efforts to ostracize newcomers, namely Sawneys.

Mrs. Sawney emerges as a compelling figure in this act. Her sharp tongue and unyielding spirit make her a force to be reckoned with. She is both a protector of her family and a challenger of societal norms. Her interactions with the Jacksons, council officials, and other residents reveal the deep divides within the community. The Sawneys' fight for individuality and identity resonates deeply, making their story both personal and universal. Mrs. Sawney's reflects on what her family has lost. The caravan, though modest, represented freedom. The estate, with its rules and expectations, feels like a prison. Yet, she vows to fight for her family's right to live as they choose. Her defiance is a powerful statement against the conformity that the estate represents. Through their struggles, the play critiques the social policies of post-war Britain and challenges the audience to rethink their assumptions about class, community, and conformity.

The Jacksons represent the so-called respectable working class. They pride themselves on their neat gardens, clean doorsteps, and adherence to societal norms. To them, the Sawneys are an unwelcome disturbance. They see the family's unruly lifestyle as a threat to the estate's fragile order. For the Jacksons, the council estate is more than a place to live. It is a symbol of upward mobility, discipline, and respectability. They cannot tolerate anyone who challenges this vision.

Tensions between the two families escalate quickly. The Sawneys are loud, colourful, and unapologetic. They laugh, argue, and sing at all hours. Their children run wild, playing in the streets and causing mischief. In contrast, the Jacksons insist on quiet, orderly behavior. The Jacksons' children are polite and obedient, expected to follow rules without question. The contrast between the two families could not be more apparent. This divide becomes a microcosm of larger societal conflicts. Mrs. Jackson is infuriated on seeing Rachel's flirtations with her husband, Mr. Jackson, and sees it as a "disgrace" and she says "If it goes on I shall make a complaint. They've no right to send people like that to live here" (Live Like Pigs 120).

For the Jacksons, it is a step toward respectability, but for the Sawneys, it is a prison. To Jackson's "their neighbours, proper, tacky, narrowly ambitious, terrified of them but also fascinated, they are invaders from a world of irrationality and brute appetite, anachronisms in an age of universal plumbing and savings accounts" (Gilman: 1966, 58). These different perspectives create an undercurrent of hostility that runs through the play. "The most obvious of conflicts occurs in Live Like Pigs, where the Jacksons' and the Sawneys' two houses share the stage. This stage setting prepares us for a two-sided tug-of-war between two competing sets of values". (Individual and Society in the Early Plays of John Arden 244-245).

The Jacksons, led by the stern and judgmental Mr. Jackson, take it upon themselves to enforce conformity. As complaints pile up, the Jacksons take on the role of enforcers. Mr. Jackson, in particular, becomes increasingly vocal. He insists that the Sawneys are bringing down the estate. His family sees Mrs. Sawney as "fat as a pig, ent she?" (Live Like Pigs 112) In heated conversations with other neighbors, he paints the family as unfit to live among them. This scapegoating creates a sense of unity among the neighbors, but it is a unity built on exclusion. The more Mr. Jackson speaks against the Sawneys, the more the community's underlying prejudices are revealed. Mr. Jackson views himself as a guardian of the estate's moral standards. He believes it is his duty to bring the Sawneys in line. This self-righteousness blinds him to his own prejudices. He refuses to see the humanity of the Sawneys, reducing them to stereotypes of chaos and disorder. As the tensions rise, the audience sees the hypocrisy of the Jacksons and others like them. Sawneys and Jacksons represent what Gramsci calls "power struggle between two opposing forces within the social and cultural sphere" (Gramsci: 1990, 53). They claim to value community but are quick to ostracize those who do not fit their mould. They speak of order but create division. They uphold respectability at the cost of empathy. These contradictions are central to the play's critique of post-war social reforms. The clash between the Sawneys and the Jacksons highlights the broader conflict between individuality and social control. The Sawneys refuse to be shaped by the council estate's rigid expectations. They cling to their identity, even as the world around them demands conformity. The Jacksons, on the other hand, have sacrificed parts of themselves to fit in. They have embraced the estate's values, believing that conformity brings security and status. The play does not present the Sawneys as perfect but flawed, loud, and chaotic. But these traits are also their strengths; their vitality, humour, and resilience contrast sharply with the sterile environment of the council estate. The Sawneys'

defiance is not just rebellion for its own sake. It is a fight for survival – a refusal to be erased.

With the progression of the play, the tension between the Sawneys and their neighbors reaches a boiling point. The Sawneys' chaotic and lively lifestyle continues to disrupt the carefully maintained order of the council estate. Their children play noisily in the streets, music blares from their windows, and Mrs. Sawney's sharp tongue keeps her family firmly in the spotlight. For the Jacksons, this behavior is unbearable. It is a direct challenge to their values of discipline and respectability. The tension, simmering in the first act, now begins to bubble over into open conflict. "Blackmouth's group, embodying the creed of arbitrary and predatory violence, opposes the Jacksons, with their creed of total acceptance of social conformity" (Individual and Society in the Early Plays of John Arden 243).

Arden uses these interactions to peel back the layers of conformity within the estate. The neighbors, who initially seemed polite and orderly, reveal their own frustrations and insecurities. Some complain about the council's lack of enforcement. Others grumble about rising rents, unemployment, and the lack of opportunities. Beneath their outward respectability lies a deep well of dissatisfaction. Their anger at the Sawneys becomes a way to vent their own frustrations. By blaming the Sawneys, they avoid confronting the larger systemic issues that plague their lives. Arden's descriptions of the physical environment mirror the emotional turmoil of the characters. The identical houses, narrow streets, and neatly trimmed gardens symbolize the conformity that the estate enforces. Yet, this appearance of order is deceptive. The more the characters try to maintain it, the more their underlying tensions are exposed. The estate, rather than fostering community, becomes a space of division and surveillance. Arden delves deeper into the complexities of working-class life. He shows that the council estate, far from being a utopia, is fraught with challenges. The promise of a "better life" that council housing was supposed to bring remains unfulfilled.

Arden explores the costs of forced integration. While council housing was meant to bring people together, it often did the opposite. By imposing a single set of values on diverse communities, it created conflict rather than unity. The Sawneys, with their distinct culture and way of life, are seen as outsiders. Their presence challenges the idea that everyone can or should fit into the same mould. Arden critiques this approach, showing that true community requires acceptance of differences, not forced assimilation.

The Jacksons and their neighbors, who cling to the estate's rules, are trapped in a cycle of dissatisfaction. They aspire to middle-class respectability but remain constrained by economic hardship and social expectations. The Sawneys, by refusing to conform, expose the contradictions of this system. The council's attempts to intervene only exacerbate the situation. Officials visit the Sawneys repeatedly, issuing warnings and threats. They complain, "Here we are and here we have got to live. But we are keeping them out from us, every bloody one of them. [He stands astride and terrible.]" (Live Like Pigs 109). They demand that the family "adjust" to the estate's norms. For the Sawneys, these visits are humiliating. But for the neighbours, they are not enough. The Jacksons and others argue that the Sawneys should be evicted. This push for exclusion highlights the estate's

failure to foster true community. Rather than working to understand and support one another, the residents turn on those who do not fit their mould. Arden raises important questions about the imposition of societal norms. Who decides what acceptable behavior is? What happens to those who cannot or will not conform?

The tension reaches its peak in the act's climactic moments. A heated argument breaks out between the Sawneys and the Jacksons. Harsh words are exchanged, and accusations fly. The neighbors, drawn to the commotion, gather to watch. Their silence speaks volumes. No one steps in to mediate or de-escalate the situation. Instead, they stand as passive observers, complicit in the division that has taken root in the estate. This moment is a turning point. It forces the audience to confront the impact of the estate's rules and expectations on its residents. The argument is not just about the Sawneys and the Jacksons but about the larger societal forces that have shaped their lives. The estate, meant to represent progress and community, has become a site of conflict and exclusion. Arden leaves the audience with a sense of unease, forcing them to question their own assumptions about class, community, and the costs of progress. Arden raises difficult questions about the price of integration and the meaning of community, leaving the audience eager to see how the story will unfold.

Towards the Climax, the Sawneys are still resolute in their refusal to assimilate, becoming the focus of the council estate's collective ire. Their nonconformity is no longer just a point of frustration—it is seen as a direct challenge to the community's values. The Jacksons, who have been at the forefront of this conflict, now rally the other residents. A sense of mob mentality begins to take hold, and the neighbours unite against the Sawneys, blaming them for the growing unrest in the estate. "We are going to get you out from this and will check you in the canal, you bloody gypsies" (Live Like Pigs 183-84). Mr. Jackson, emboldened by the support of his neighbors, becomes more aggressive in his attempts to isolate the Sawneys. He organizes meetings where the residents discuss "dealing with the problem." These gatherings reveal the deep-seated prejudices that have been simmering beneath the surface. The neighbors, who pride themselves on being respectable and orderly, speak in harsh, dehumanizing terms about the Sawneys. They see the family as outsiders, incapable of understanding or respecting their way of life.

Arden's portrayal of these meetings is striking, amenably presenting these conversations laced with hypocrisy. The residents claim to value community, yet their actions fracture it further. They frame their hostility as a defense of the estate's stability, but it is clear that their true motivations are rooted in fear and prejudice. This collective hostility becomes a means of deflecting attention from their insecurities. By uniting against the Sawneys, the neighbors find a temporary sense of purpose; however, this unity is fragile and unsustainable.

Mrs. Sawney sees the growing hostility for what it is—a desperate attempt to maintain control in a community that is already unraveling. Her resilience becomes even more pronounced when she defends her family with fierce determination, standing her ground despite the mounting threats. In one powerful scene, she confronts a group of neighbors who have gathered outside her home. Her words are sharp and unflinching, accusing them of using her family as a

scapegoat for their own unhappiness. The scene is tense and emotional, highlighting both her strength and the deep divisions within the estate.

The council's involvement escalates alongside the residents' hostility. Officials, pressured by the complaints issued ultimatums to the Sawneys, demanding immediate changes to their behavior, threatening eviction if the family does not comply. In one scene the Official is annoyed with them, "what's that? Sounds like running water...Where's that kid gone-God help us, in the bath room. Hey hey lovely, hey little girly, hey hey, what do you think you're Playing at with them taps, water all over the bloody floor" (132). Official is irritated and abuses them, "Calling us pigs would you! How'd you like a real screaming sow to raven your paunch for you, hey!" (136)

These actions only serve to inflame the situation because the Sawneys feel further aggravated and alienated, while the neighbours see the council's intervention as validation of their grievances. The council, rather than mediating the conflict, inadvertently fuels it, as the small confrontations give way to outright violence. A pivotal moment comes when a group of residents vandalizes the Sawneys' property. "So rob their houses, tumble their girls, / Break their windows and all" (Live Like Pigs 105). Their caravan, parked on the edge of the estate as a symbol of their past life, is targeted. The act of destruction is both literal and symbolic. It represents the community's attempt to erase the Sawneys' identity and force them to conform. The Sawneys respond with defiance, refusing to let this act of violence break their spirit. However, the incident marks a turning point. The conflict is no longer just verbal – it has become physical and dangerous.

The violence culminates in a dramatic confrontation between the Sawneys and the rest of the estate. Arden stages this scene with precision, using sharp dialogue and tense silences to build suspense. "The final outcome – a brutal neighbourhood backlash against the Sawneys which breaks apart their family – completely reverses expectations, exposing passions and the potential for savagery lying beneath the veneer of affluent stability" (Creating Vital Theatre: New Voices in a Time of Transition 324). The neighbours, emboldened by their numbers, confront the Sawneys directly. Accusations fly, tempers flare, and the atmosphere is charged with hostility. Mrs. Sawney stands at the center of it all, defending her family with unwavering resolve. Her defiance is both inspiring and heart breaking. She knows that the odds are against her, yet she refuses to back down. This confrontation exposes the fragility of the community's supposed solidarity. While the residents appear united in their hostility toward the Sawneys, their unity begins to fracture under pressure with old grievances and rivalries resurface. Some residents start to question the morality of their actions; others, driven by fear and anger, double down on their aggression. Arden uses this moment to highlight the underlying instability of the estate. Arden shows that the community's unity built on exclusion and prejudice cannot hold.

Croaker is a marginalized figure, representing those who are outcasts in the society. He says, "Ah, it's you and me, we're the old bones, aren't we? They tears us all up, you see ... Ah, it's you and me, we're the old bones, aren't we? ... They tears us all up, you see" is deliberately used to refer to a societal force, authority figures of oppression (189). The divide is evident in the song "Old, old and thrown

on the road". This reinforces the theme of being discarded and marginalized. "Thrown on the road" suggests a lack of care or respect, a sense of being left to fend for oneself. "Washed away with the rain" evokes a sense of being erased or forgotten. "Dig a hole and put them in And never come out again" is a stark image of death and finality (189).

The play's climax is both intense and ambiguous. A physical altercation breaks out, leaving the Sawneys and the residents shaken. The violence forces everyone to confront the consequences of their actions. The Sawneys, though bruised and battered, refuse to give in. Their resilience is both a victory and a tragedy. They have retained their identity, but at a great cost. The neighbors, on the other hand, are left to grapple with their own complicity. The mob mentality that once united them now leaves them divided and uncertain. The play ends on an unresolved note as the Sawneys remain in the estate, but their future is unclear. Thus, Arden aims to present "the uncertainties of the immediate future in *Live Like Pigs*." (Freedom and Order in Arden's *Ironhand* 129) The council's threats of eviction still loom and the hostility of the neighbors has not abated. The Jacksons retreat into their home, their victory hollow and their unity strained. The estate, once a symbol of progress and community, is left fractured and broken. Arden deliberately avoids providing a clear resolution. The ambiguity forces the audience to sit with the uncomfortable realities of social and cultural exclusion. According to Nigel Hampton:

Arden's work consistently shows the artist's reluctance to provide easy solutions to complex problems; in *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*, for example, the tension between militarism and pacifism reinforces the limitations on individual action within a social framework of interlocking responsibilities. *Ironhand* pulls this tension one twist tighter, providing a formidable task for Goetz; yet it is the only meaningful approach for a dramatist who wants his audience to face squarely the awe-some consequences of political power (Freedom and Order in Arden's *Ironhand* 129).

The play does not offer easy answers or solutions. Instead, it asks difficult questions. What happens when communities prioritize conformity over acceptance? How do prejudices and insecurities shape our perceptions of others? And what is the cost of defending one's identity in the face of relentless hostility? Through this powerful open-endedness, Arden critiques the societal structures that enforce conformity at the expense of individuality. The council estate, meant to be a haven for working-class families, becomes a microcosm of broader societal failures. The Sawneys' struggle is not just their own—it is a reflection of the challenges faced by all those who resist being forced into a mould.

The play leaves the audience with a sense of unease. The unresolved conflict lingers in the mind, challenging viewers to reflect on their own communities and biases. Arden's use of ambiguity ensures that the play's themes resonate long after the final curtain falls. It is a powerful reminder of the complexities of human relationships and the dangers of prioritizing order over understanding. The neighbours' attitudes towards the Sawneys are complex and contradictory. While they initially express hostility and prejudice, there are also moments of grudging acceptance and even sympathy. Stuart The ending underscores this ambivalence,

suggesting that the conflict between the Sawneys and the established community is not easily resolved. It leaves the audience to ponder the nature of prejudice and the possibility of reconciliation. Francis Gray believes that in:

Live Like Pigs, we cannot take sides in the punch-up between the gipsy-like Sawneys and the stuffy Jacksons. But we can understand why it takes place. Arden vividly conveys the dreary quality of life on the housing estate on which families are flung together willy-nilly by hectoring authorities, to whom the Sawneys react with violence and the Jacksons with genteel complaint (John Arden 84).

The lack of a definitive ending is a deliberate choice by Arden. It avoids simplistic answers and encourages the audience to engage with the play's themes long after the curtain falls. The unresolved ending serves as a reminder that the issues of class, poverty, and social integration are ongoing and require continuous attention. According to Steve Nicholson:

His aim in drawing on the real-life crisis, he wrote, was not to write a social documentary, but to create 'a study of differing ways of life brought sharply into conflict and both losing their particular virtues under the stress of intolerance and misunderstanding' (Qtd in Modern British Playwriting: The 1960s 90).

The play's ending, with its lack of clear resolution, reflects the messy realities of social problems. It acknowledges that there are no easy solutions and that the struggles faced by the Sawneys are likely to continue. This realism is a key aspect of Arden's work and contributes to the play's enduring relevance. The ending of Live Like Pigs is not about providing closure but about prompting further reflection. It leaves the audience with a sense of unease and unanswered questions, forcing them to confront the complexities of the social issues at the heart of the play. Arden forces the audience to confront the tensions between freedom and conformity, individuality and community, and tradition and modernity. The play's unresolved ending invites reflection and debate, making it a timeless exploration of the complexities of social change. "What impresses about Live Like Pigs is ... that it survives in performance as a warm-blooded, undogmatic and beautifully-written piece of theatre" (Partners of the Imagination 40).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has explored the tension between social conformity and individual freedom in John Arden's Live Like Pigs, examining how the play critiques societal expectations and the marginalization of those who reject conventional norms. Arden presents a clash between the Sawney family, who embrace an unconventional, nomadic lifestyle, and the more rigid, rule-bound community that seeks to impose order upon them. Through this conflict, the play highlights the pressures of social conformity and the consequences faced by those who resist assimilation.

A key finding of this study is that Arden does not present a simple binary between individual freedom and social order but instead exposes the complexities of both. While the Sawneys' defiance of societal expectations suggests a form of liberation, their exclusion from mainstream society underscores the difficulties of living outside established structures. Similarly, the "respectable" community's insistence on order and propriety ultimately reveals its own hypocrisies and limitations. Arden's use of language, character dynamics,

and setting reinforces the stark divisions between these two perspectives while leaving room for ambiguity and critical engagement.

The implications of these findings extend beyond *Live Like Pigs*, offering insights into broader discussions about social class, power structures, and the ways in which dominant cultures enforce conformity. Arden's work remains relevant in contemporary debates about social inclusion, systemic oppression, and the rights of marginalized communities to self-determination. However, this study is limited in scope, focusing primarily on textual analysis rather than broader theatrical interpretations, audience reception, or comparative studies with other playwrights of the period. A more extensive investigation into Arden's other works or similar themes in post-war British theatre could further illuminate his political and artistic stance.

Future research could explore how *Live Like Pigs* has been received in different cultural contexts or how its themes resonate with modern concerns about housing, class struggles, and social integration. Additionally, examining productions of the play and their directorial choices could provide further insight into how Arden's critique of conformity is visually and theatrically realized. *Live Like Pigs* challenges audiences to question the boundaries between social order and personal freedom, leaving them to grapple with whether true individuality can exist within a society that demands compliance. Arden's ability to provoke such discussions ensures the play's enduring significance in contemporary discourse on power, identity, and resistance.

FURTHER STUDY

This research is still delayed, so further research is needed on the topic *The Tension Between Social Conformity and Individual Freedom: a Study of John Arden's Live like Pigs* to improve this research and add insight for readers.

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