

The Anarchy Of The Monarchy In John Arden's Armstrong's Last Goodnight

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Abstract: This article illustrates the anarchy of the monarchy type of governance. The play Armstrong's Last Goodnight by John Arden exhibits the political tension that prevailed on the border between Scotland and England in the sixteenth century. The conflict of the play is amid the actions and thoughts of Lindsay and the Scottish border-raider, John Armstrong of Gilnockie. Lindsay is a poet, nefarious herald, and tutor of the Scottish Crown who manipulates King James V by his fortitude. He snares the life of the notorious Armstrong in retaliation for his secretary's death. This article emphasizes the conspiracy involved in the execution of Armstrong and disorder in the judiciary of the monarchy. It also recounts the refreshing ancient history of the Armstrongs around the world.

Keywords: Anglo- Scottish Border, Monarchy, Anarchy, King James V of Scotland, Sir David Lindsay, John Armstrong of Gilnockie, John Arden.

Introduction

The world constitutes nearly 195 countries in which each country differs in its form of governance. There are many forms of government namely monarchy, Oligarchy, Anarchy, Democracy, Aristocracy, and so on. Monarchy is the most common form of government that ever ruled this world. Anarchy is a system of rule where there are no laws or the absence of government. In this article, the word 'Anarchy' refers to the disorder or the lawlessness in a political administration. Monarchy is the type of government that is ruled by a King and followed by his heirs. So, John Arden's Armstrong's Last Goodnight presents the sixteenth-century monarchy's diplomatic judiciary. This play is based on a true history of the Scottish border-raider Armstrong of Gilnockie who was executed by the King James V of Scotland and his Tutor, Lindsay. The play is subtitled 'An Exercise in Diplomacy' which involves the diplomatic manoeuvring of Lindsay in Scottish affairs. This article recapitulates and specifies the main

disadvantages of the structure of monarchy rule.

John Arden is a modern British playwright born on 26th October 1930 in Barnsley, Yorkshire, England, and died on 28th March 2012 in Galway. He is a versatile and highly controversial writer whose plays are almost commercially unsuccessful in his time. He is enraged and impatient with the hypocrisy of the upper class which made him one of the 'Angry Young Men' Movement. He believes that theatre is for a social responsibility where the playwright should depict the potentiality of the people. He is a person who is much interested in history and the origins of everything that happens around him. Arden is called Britain's Brecht as he has been influenced by the works of the German theatre practitioner, Bertolt Brecht. One cannot develop any kind of sentimentality towards the characters of the plays as Arden alerts his spectators with the contradictory issues of the characters. Arden employs the features of the epic theatre and alienation or distancing effect

in his dramas. He neither instructs nor entertains in his plays. Critics namely Albert Hunt, Ronald Hayman, and Michael Anderson have remarked and emphasized the astute featuring of Arden's inventory language, critical characters, and fine setting in his plays. In this research paper, we explore the thematic hypocrisy involved in the monarchy order of rule in Arden's Armstrong's Last Goodnight. This article aims to distinguish John Arden's Liberty from true history, comprehend the conflicts in the system of monarchy, understand the need for the proper way of justice in a judiciary, and know the history of the Armstrongs.

In his preface to this play, Arden says that the play is based on true history, but it is not to be taken as an accurate chronicle. He has taken the biggest liberty of connecting Sir David Lindsay with the events leading up to the execution of John Armstrong, but those events have involved political and diplomatic intervention. Lindsay is not only the author of *The Three Estates* and *Lord Lyon King of Arms*; he is also employed regularly in the diplomatic missions of the Scottish crown. Lindsay in his views on the business of Armstrong can be figured out in his work *The Three Estates*. Arden states that he does not discover any evidence at all that Lindsay has to do anything with James the Fifth's punitory of 1530. The English heresy is not worried about the church in Scotland, and Arden doubts that any forerunners of John Knox may wander in the Ettrick Forest. But Lindsay himself has possibly taken a non-Fundamentalist view on religious questions: certain modern parallels incite Arden to introduce those views into the play and demonstrate a more extreme philosophy in the character, the Evangelist. Moreover, Arden has no idea whether Lindsay has a Mistress or not. In writing this play, Arden has somewhat been influenced by Conor Cruise O'Brien's *To Katanga and Back* (*The Congo Crisis* in the 1960s). Arden suggests here and there a moral similarity of the Congo conflict rather than its political, economic, or racial problems. There are certain difficulties in the language of the play. Arden says that it would be silly to reconstruct the exact Scots speech of the period like Lindsay's work. He has put together a sort of Babylonish dialect which he hopes to be practical on stage and suggest the sixteenth century's milieu. Arden has adapted

Arthur Miller's early American speech in *The Crucible*. He has also suggested the sketch plan of the stage arrangement in detail and precisely. The play is engaged to be played within the medieval conventions of simultaneous mansions. Arden has also given a brief description of the characters and their costumes.

The sixteenth-century officials of Scotland and England are seriously debating the implementation of peace between the countries within their borders. John Armstrong of Gilnockie (Armstrong is also called Gilnockie), the Scottish border raider, is the most wanted outlaw of the borders. Sir David Lindsay, the tutor and the herald of King James V, works in bringing out the notorious Armstrong. He accepts the ideas of English for the sake of peace in considering Armstrong. So, Lindsay persuades him with his logic and offer. But things get more personal, when the Evangelist of Armstrong stabs Lindsay's secretary, in a meeting. Lindsay realizes the political game through his secretary's death. So, by offering Armstrong safe conduct, Lindsay traps and hangs Armstrong with his men by King's order where destiny marks Armstrong's last goodnight. It is a three-act play with quite a large cast. The action or the setting of the play takes place in Scotland, early in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The play was first performed at the Glasgow Citizen's Theatre on 5 May 1964.

The Malignant Diplomacy

The officials of Scotland and England were in a conference to ensure the urgency of security in their outskirts as the outlaws of the borders of Scotland, especially the notorious Armstrongs create chaos and violence on England's border. The commissioner of England enumerates the crime cases of Armstrong in the England limit and warns the Scots to take immediate action against Armstrong as King Henry is angry and impatient. The Scots Clerk assuages the English Clerk by introducing the diplomat and the tutor, Sir David Lindsay, "If he canna dae it, there is nae man that can" (Arden, 2002 p.151). The ideology of "to murder ane murderer is a thegither waste and bad waste" (Arden, 2002 p.153) tells the diplomatic wit of Lindsay when the English Clerk asks to bribe Wamphray (another border-raider) to kill Armstrong.

Lindsay is a person who is not much impressed with the story of the Gordian Knot, he seeks victory by unravelling it. So, he plans to use and take his mistress along with him to Gilnockie. The art of making political advantage through women shows Lindsay's guiltless politics.

After a few years of enmity, Wamphray and Gilnockie reconcile at a meeting in the forest. Wamphray is in a relationship with Eliot's daughter, Meg, but he is not willing to marry her. So, he seeks help from Armstrong to escape from the hands of the Eliots as Gilnockie's wife is Eliot's sister. But Armstrong traps Wamphray and hands him over to the Eliots for his disloyalty. Meg loves Wamphray and laments about his death. Her grief over Wamphray's death is an alarming fated check to Armstrong.

Lindsay persuades Armstrong with his wit and logic by offering him the position of Lieutenant and warden in the Kingdom. But Armstrong's case becomes more personal when a protestant Evangelist who assists Armstrong kills his secretary McGlass. Evangelist feels pity for Meg, whereas McGlass taunts the relationship between them. McGlass questions how he can sanctify Armstrong - the actual reason behind Wamphray's death. He has been provoked by the logical sarcasm of McGlass and abruptly stabs him with McGlass's gully knife. At his death bed, McGlass incites Lindsay,

"...Ye did tak pride in your recognition of the fallibility of man. Recognize your ain, then, Lindsay: ye have ane certain weakness, ye can never accept the gravit'y of ane other man's violence. For you yourself hae never been grave in the hale of your life!" (Arden, 2002, p.234).

The words of McGlass suddenly alert him to the reality of the gameplay. So, Lindsay invites Armstrong with the King's letter which ensures his safe conduct. Armstrong dressed lavishly arrives at the castle, where he has been trapped and hanged with his men at Carlanrigg for disrespecting the King.

Lindsay features Shakuni in Mahabharata, the maternal uncle of the Kauravas. Shakuni is a devious, crafty, intelligent King of Gandhara and the great advisor of his nephew Duryodhana. As Bhishma

is the ultimate reason behind his father and brother's death, to revenge back he initiated Kurukshetra War. Armstrong is in no way implicit to the death of McGlass. He is mesmerized by the gospels of the Evangelist. The death of Armstrong has been compared with the death of Wamphray. Armstrong traps the life of Wamphray for deceiving Eliot's daughter, Meg. Critics criticize that fate becomes inevitable in Armstrong's execution. Ronald Hayman says that the trick played by Gilnockie on Wamphray, and Lindsay on Gilnockie are the same. However, the reasons are not the same in the execution of Wamphray and Armstrong. Wamphray betrays Meg but Armstrong is betrayed by the monarchy. Nevertheless, Lindsay's diplomacy is biased, ungenerous, and malignant which sketches the monarchy as restricted governance. This projects diplomacy as a powerful tool in the administration of the monarchy.

The Teen King being the Puppet

The hierarchical rule of one family is a great infirmity in a monarchy. There is no opportunity for any other intellectual people to govern the country. The heir may be a kid or sometimes maybe inefficient in skills and administration, it has been made sure that the king is from the royal monarch hereditary. The king or the monarch's representatives only have the power to elect the next King. In this play, King James IV died in the Battle of Flodden which made King James V of Scotland be a king at a very young age. When Porter says that the king couldn't find an occasion to converse with Lord Lyon, Lindsay says that "he's still in statu pupillari" (Arden, 2002, p.226). He tests the king whether he apprehends his values. If the king remains a forever schoolboy he has been, "he will put himself for ever outwith all hope of stringent kingly government" (Arden, 2002, p.227). Arden describes the Scottish King, James V of Scotland as a seventeen-year-old small boy who appears to be very young for his age and looks like a scared doll when dressed in regalia. The Teen King, James V could not tolerate Armstrong's wealthy adornments which he wore at their meet. The king admits that Armstrong is the only man with a hat such as the king. Armstrong realizes and laughs uncertainly. The king orders to hang Armstrong of Gilnockie for the act of disgrace. Armstrong is shocked and gets that his men are

drawn out. He says that he is been invited with a King's letter of "Safe Conduct" from Lindsay and requests for it. But Lindsay remains expressionless. Armstrong of Gilnockie has been betrayed by Sir David Lindsay of the Mount. As Glenda Leeming says that probably the purport of the play could seem, by all accounts, to be that liberal idealism ought to consistently bow to unforgiving requirements and that violence ought to be used to end mercilessness, or is it those simple men who trust their superiors will continually be betrayed by turncoat government authorities. After the King orders Armstrong's death, Lindsay reminds: "...Remember: King James the Fifth, though but seventeen years of age, did become an adult man, and learnt to rule his kingdom. He had been well instructed in the necessities of state by that poet that was his tutor." (Arden, 2002, p.248). King James V understands the necessity of peace with England. But his inexperience fails to realize the reason behind Armstrong's behaviour. This states that the tutor of the king at times uses the young monarch for his favour which cripples the standard of a monarchy.

The Discourteous Punitory

The punitory of John Armstrong is diplomatic. It questions the honesty and chivalry of the Scottish kingdom. Lindsay retributes his secretary's death by betraying the valiant Armstrong of Gilnockie with his trust. He could have considered the reasons behind Armstrong's activities. Certainly, Armstrong should have given a chance to vindicate his actions. The Scottish borderers are the frontline warriors of the war between Scotland and England. Because of war, the border areas have been left behind with no legal or proper authority to lead the border reivers. So, the clans of the Anglo- Scottish borders have taken powers over their respective lands within the boundaries. For nearly four centuries (from the late 13th century to the early 17th century), England and Scotland had border issues and often they were at war during those years. Tensions prevailed between the countries even when they were not at war. The personal animosity among the borderers and authority drifted an unsettled peace for centuries. Religious marches happened between the countries which marked the debatable lands on the borders. The outlaws took advantage of the

unauthorized debatable lands where Armstrongs lived and around the lands. They were not given proper support for the livelihood of the Armstrongs and the other clans. So, unfortunately, clans like Armstrongs took the authority of the Borders and were involved in robbery and plundering to secure their sustenance of life. *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* is an anthology of border ballads researched, collected, and edited by Sir Walter Scott and first published in the year 1802. There is a child ballad numbered 169 in the border ballads which describes the life of John Armstrong. It tells about the strength and chivalry of John Armstrong who guarded Scotland as a soldier from the attack of England. The ballad further marks that it is not safe to appear as a reviver in front of the King. Walter Scott romanticized Armstrong as a folk- hero. The book, *The Steel Bonnets* by George MacDonald Fraser depicts the reality of the Armstrongs,

"The Armstrongs were the most feared and dangerous riding clan on the whole frontier. ... In Johnnie Armstrong's day they could put 3000 men in the saddle and probably did more damage by foray than any other two families combined, both in England and Scotland." (p.72)

Undoubtedly, John Armstrong is a great warrior who is dangerous and inspiring for his perseverance and vigour. He has become so furious and dangerous because the efforts of the borderers have not been recognized by the monarchy for centuries. Armstrong's Gilnockie Tower is one of the defensible towers on the borders which stands still even in the 21st century. Armstrong's wife says that Gilnockie is the protection of Scotland. Lindsay's grief over his secretary's death has made him cut the Gordian Knot with the Sword rather than unravelling it. The king's punitory is discourteous and disloyal injustice.

In John Arden's *Armstrong's Last Goodnight*, the monarchy system of government uses the judiciary to gratify its vengeance. It fails to investigate the exact reasons behind the exercise of the borderers as the teen king has been used by the tutor, Lindsay for his revenge. The above traits have made monarchy grade down its rank of rule in

today's world. One can find a kind of biased justice in monarchy when the king is involved in the case. This is because the country is ruled by the monarch as they are not elected by the people. The people have no right to question the monarch's order. They must accept the king as it's a system of one-family rule. The execution of John Armstrong becomes a great history today which portrays the Machiavellianism of the system of monarchy. The life of Armstrong is the pioneer history behind today's surname the 'Armstrong'. By history, after the throne of James VI, the Anglo- Scottish War came to an end. The borderers are numbered, and their castles are destroyed. Gilnockie Tower is one among the few that is surviving to date. Armstrongs have lost their natives and dispersed around the world. They all carried and followed their ancestors' strength, bravery, and independence to their migrated place. One among them is the world popular and the first human in the world to step on the moon, Neil Armstrong. There is an archaic undeniable 400-year-old law in the "Justice of the Peace", that any person named Armstrong must be hanged. Neil Armstrong is the first freeman of the burgh. He visited his ancestor's place Langholm, the area of the Gilnockie Tower, and the traditional seat of Clan Armstrong in the year 1972. It has so been inspiring that the Armstrongs possess a 400-year-old history with them and still they continue to carry the name with the same strength and bravery. England and Scotland feared the physical and mental strength of the Armstrongs. Generally, monarchs could not tolerate anyone is better than them. If needed, the monarchy performs the act of anarchy to render its demands. The Scottish King James V and his tutor, Sir David Lindsay are discourteous in the execution of John Armstrong which remarks on the anarchy of the monarchy. The type of jurisdiction changes and differs in each era out of evolution and civilization. There is certainly an anarchic side in every government, however, the authority of the administration plays a pivotal role in protecting the justice of the society. Any form of government is for the welfare of the people. So, every people's issue has to be taken unprejudiced and deeply analyzed before judgment which is the fundamental duty of all forms of governance.

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