

rewarding proximity of art and politics, and how best to make exciting drama out of that tantalizingly symbiotic but difficult relationship. And to dismiss the major Shaw plays, most of which are still very much alive in the modern international repertoire, as "hybrids or montages of stump speech, journalistic op-ed, and thesis play peppered with jokes and lengthy diatribes" is clever word-making perhaps, but no more, revealing a fundamental lack of appreciation of what Shaw's theater and indeed a good deal of good or great theater is all about. To laugh is to survive, something Shaw never forgot. And to suggest as the author does on page 143 that "Shaw lived far too long" is to be not merely ungracious but simply arrogant and crude—a statement quite unnecessary in purportedly scholarly writing. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum!* Furthermore, the author's tedious penchant for *ex cathedra* statements in an academic prose often foggy, awkward, or downright opaque also limits the appeal of this discourse.

Like Wagner or Marx, two of his intellectual heroes, Shaw is still controversial and will continue to provoke the widest possible approaches to him, his work, and his ideas (gay rights, children's rights, to name just two current issues now before the public and about which he spoke out long ago and early on). He is still very much among us. And he will not disappear. He is, as men of genius always are, a mystery, his own creation, difficult, imponderable, of time but also out of time, someone constantly redefining himself, a spiritual, theatrical, and literary chameleon, or a Celtic magpie who would and did steal anything, and make it uniquely and exasperatingly his own. A good many of his plays, hither and yon, are best forgotten, some dated, others didactic to the point of oblivious blather or mere talkiness. But the best ones, and they are numerous, place him quite squarely in the front rank of twentieth-century dramatists. When Shaw was seventy, both Brecht and Pirandello contributed laudatory essays to a *Festschrift* in the playwright's honor. They knew, themselves masters of the drama, what place the bantam Irishman occupied on the modern stage.

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Patricia Hyde. *Thomas Arden in Faversham: The Man Behind the Myth*.
Faversham: Faversham Society, 1996. Pp. xii + 612. £42.00.

It is unfortunate that only specialists in English Renaissance drama seem to know the anonymous domestic tragedy *Arden of Faversham* (1592). Virtually any audience could enjoy its bizarre and macabre account of the real-life murder of a landowner and businessman by his wife, her lover, some of their servants, and various knaves named Black Will, Shakebag, and Greene in 1551. The playwright, at various times surmised to be Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Kyd, culled most of his details

from the chroniclers John Stow and Raphael Holinshed, the most salacious of which hinted that the husband encouraged his spouse's infidelity to advance his career. However, Patricia Hyde is interested not in the play but in publishing (and, to some extent, analyzing) all of the historical records concerning Thomas Arden "in the hope that it will give [the people of Faversham] a greater understanding of and respect for their sixteenth-century forbears" (vi). The historical person, it seems, has little in common with the pathetic tyrant onstage.

Hyde's enormous book reproduces "full and accurate transcripts of all the relevant documents" (xii) concerning Thomas Arden and the people who surrounded him. She devotes most of her text to reproducing this primary material in the form of twenty-one separate appendices: Stow's narrative; records relating to Arden in Sandwich, Canterbury, and Faversham; informed surmises concerning who owned property in the town and county in early 1530s (112-549). She precedes these transcripts with thirteen very short chapters that treat "The early years," "Man of property," "Events leading up to the murder and the murder itself," "Punishments," etc. (1-112). Hyde does not intend that *Thomas Arden in Faversham* should serve as an authoritative sourcebook for a Renaissance play. Instead, she invites us to examine the records for ourselves and speculate with her about the history of a small town in the sixteenth century beset by the calamity of a spectacular and lurid murder.

The reader may encounter the most difficulty in this earlier part of the book. Hyde's considerable strengths lie in the activity of research itself, not in prose style or in telling a story. Her narratives are at times impressionistic and disorganized, and she repeats material from section to section so that unnecessary overlap occurs. Arden himself, the purported subject of the book, continually disappears from the history that Hyde tries to construct. She becomes interested in another, ancillary figure and then writes about him or her for several paragraphs. To this reviewer her style seems colloquial and eccentric. On the murder itself, Hyde asks us: "Can you wonder that everyone was astounded? Aren't you?" (8). Some readers may find themselves distracted when they notice that this book, issued by the Faversham Society, remains in need of further proofreading. And although Hyde argues for the importance of writing about the historical Thomas Arden rather than *Arden of Faversham*, she admits that the play itself created the "historical interest" that necessitated her book: "I suspect that if Thomas Arden had not been so spectacularly murdered, and if a play, thought possibly to be by Shakespeare, had not been written about the crime, he would long ago have been forgotten" (17). One may ask whether such statements undercut the enterprise, or why an appendix or two could not have been devoted to the literary scholarship.

However, such criticism is perhaps trifling. *Thomas Arden in Faversham* contains absolutely sumptuous illustrations. Some sixty maps, paintings, and documents are lovingly and carefully reproduced in color

and black and white. One of the handsomest is the (partial) glossy fold-out reproduction of a color map of the East Swale (British Library MS. Cotton Charter xiii.12) commissioned in the time of Henry VIII (c. 1514–39). Chapter 10, the book's best, is probably the clearest account of the murder itself that one could read (80–88); Hyde culls Stow (and Holinshed) usefully and judiciously for details. She constructs the historical Arden to dispel certain myths concerning his dramatic representation: that he was an important landowner whom everyone hated. Finally, although Hyde might be faulted for the dearth of commentary on the play, her demonstrated skill with primary sources and enormous knowledge of the period make some of the "theory" that new historicists promulgate about the "culture" that produced *Arden of Faversham* seem rather shallow and anachronistic—e.g., that the playwright is somehow sympathetic to Alice the murderess, as if he were a prehistoric feminist. The horrifying account of the punishments refute such concepts, and Stow's own sarcastic aside speaks for itself: "Than came this good wyfe, and with a knyfe gave hir husband 7 or 8 pricks in the brest because she would make him sure" (121). I will be sure to treasure my copy of the text; browsing through the documents with Hyde's assistance aids one's understanding of early modern culture.

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Minoru Fujita and Leonard Pronko, eds. *Shakespeare East and West*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. Pp. xiii + 196. \$45.00.

Togo Igawa, a Japanese actor working with the RSC at the Swan Theatre, tells how the leading actor was once so incensed by spectators glued to the text on their laps that he swooped down on a culprit, plucked the book away, and tossed it into the air. I take this as the defining anecdote of the present collection. One can of course regard it as an instance of luvvie fascism, the impulse of actors to boss their audience around. But Poh Sim Plowright, quoting the story with approval, sees the production of Shakespeare as a way of "freeing" us from the text:

In a vivid way, I think this story makes a point about the way in which the refusal to lift one's eyes literally and metaphorically from the text, can cripple theatrical effect. And the creation of exciting stage images in a Shakespeare production—which are carriers of meaning beyond language—is often achieved by performances and techniques that come from other traditions which free the play from the constraints of the original text. (51–52)

This piquant view of the play as prisoner lays the foundation stone here. *Shakespeare East and West* is an exploration of the larger ways in which Shakespeare can be detached, or prised away, from the constraints of the text. The global multi-cultural interchanges take this very