Arden of Faversham Study Guide

Arden of Faversham by Anonymous

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham was first published in London in 1592, although it may have been written and performed several years earlier than that. The play appeared during the golden age of English drama that occurred toward the end of the Elizabethan Age, which refers to the reign of Elizabeth I, from 1558 to 1603.

Arden of Faversham was published anonymously, and as of the early 2000s, the author remains unknown. It is possible that it was written by one of the three leading dramatists of the day: Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, or William Shakespeare. The play appears to have been popular during its time, being reprinted in 1599 and again in 1633, and it has been revived on many occasions in modern times.

The play, which is classified as a domestic tragedy, is based on a sensational crime that took place in the small town of Faversham in the county of Kent, England, in 1551. The most prominent Faversham citizen, the wealthy landowner Thomas Arden, was murdered by two men hired by Arden's wife, Alice, who wanted to get rid of her husband because she was having an affair with a man named Mosby.

In this chapter, all quotations are from the edition of *Arden of Faversham* edited by M. L. Wine, in the Revels Plays series published by Methuen. In some sources, the name Faversham is spelled Feversham.

Author Biography

Nationality 1: English

The author of *Arden of Faversham* is unknown. The play was first published in London in 1592, although it may have been both written and performed several years earlier. Various theories have been advanced over the years regarding its author's identity. Minor Elizabethan dramatists, such as Robert Greene and George Peele, have been mentioned, but because of the high quality of the play, scholars have often investigated the possibility that it was written by one of the three most accomplished dramatists of the era: Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, or William Shakespeare.

Thomas Kyd (1558-1594) is known in the early 2000s for his play, *The Spanish Tragedy*. But few other plays can be confidently ascribed to him. The case for his authorship of *Arden of Faversham* once rested on a belief that Kyd wrote the play *Soliman and Perseda* and a pamphlet, *The Murder of John Brewen*. There are, it is alleged, parallels between the two works and *Arden of Faversham*. However, modern scholarship in general regards Kyd's authorship of *Soliman and Perseda* as doubtful and has discredited the notion that Kyd wrote *The Murder of John Brewen*. There is no other evidence, either internal (the themes and language of the play) or external (contemporary documents), that would link Kyd to *Arden of Faversham*.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) was the author of six plays, including *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587), *The Jew of Malta* (first performed in 1592), and *Dr. Faustus* (first published 1604). Marlowe is usually proposed as a collaborator on *Arden of Faversham* rather than as its sole author. Some scholars have noted similarities in the imagery used in *Arden of Faversham* and in Marlowe's plays. It is also pointed out that Marlowe came from Kent, and there are many references to places in Kent in the play. However, as with Kyd, there is no external evidence linking Marlowe to *Arden of Faversham*, and few if any scholars in the early 2000s would be prepared to argue the case for his authorship of this play.

Claims have been made that William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was the author in whole or part of *Arden of Faversham*. However, as with the other candidates, there is no external evidence to support such a claim. None of the early editions of Shakespeare's work included *Arden of Faversham*, which until 1770 was never linked to any particular author, either in published editions or play catalogues (with the one exception of a list of plays published in 1656, since discredited, which attributed it to Shakespeare).

Some critics argue that *Arden of Faversham* bears no relation to Shakespeare's plays in style or theme. Others have found similarities between *Arden of Faversham* and Shakespeare's *Henry VI* trilogy (1590-1592) and *Richard III* (1592-1593). In *Marlowe's Imagery and the Marlowe Canon*, Marion Bodwell Smith found close parallels between Shakespeare's imagery in the early plays and the histories and the imagery in *Arden of Faversham*. She also found parallels with Marlowe's imagery and raised the possibility of collaboration between Marlowe and Shakespeare on *Arden of Faversham*. M. L.

Wine, an editor of *Arden of Faversham* (1973), argues that although nothing could be known for certain about the authorship of the play, Shakespeare was the strongest candidate: “characterization, structure, underlying theme, and appropriateness of language figure more prominently and more suggestively with him than they do with any other writer proposed.” However, the conclusion of Martin White, who has also edited an edition of the play, was that “the undoubted strengths of the play . . . demonstrate that the author was a master playwright, but one whose identity must remain (at least on present evidence), tantalizingly unknown.”

Plot Summary

Scene 1

As *Arden of Faversham* begins, Thomas Arden is talking with his friend, Franklin. Franklin tells him that the Lord of Somerset has given Arden all the lands that were formerly owned by the Abbey of Faversham. But this does not lift Arden's melancholy mood. He is grief-stricken because his wife is having an affair with Mosby, whom he contemptuously refers to as a botcher, a tailor who does repairs. Arden is jealous and vows that Mosby must die. Franklin advises him to treat his wife gently and suggests that Arden and he spend some time in London.

When Arden's wife enters, Arden tells her he heard her speak Mosby's name in her sleep. Alice makes light of it, saying that was probably because they had been talking about Mosby the previous evening. When Arden says he is going to London for a month, Alice pretends to be distressed, saying she cannot live unless he returns within a day or two. After Arden and Franklin exit, Alice soliloquizes that she is glad her husband is going to London, because she is in love with Mosby.

Adam from the Flower-de-Luce inn enters and tells Alice that Mosby is in town, but she may not visit him. Alice wants to know if Mosby is angry with her. She gives Adam a pair of silver dice to give to Mosby with the message that he should come to her door that morning and greet her as a stranger, so as to avoid suspicion. After Adam exits, Alice says she knows Mosby loves her, but he is afraid of her husband. She says she hates her husband and vows that he must die.

Arden's servant, Michael, enters. At Alice's request, he has sworn to kill Arden within a week. In exchange, Alice has promised him the hand of Susan, Mosby's sister. Michael says he has heard that Susan has been promised to a painter, Clarke, but Alice tells him this is not so.

Mosby enters and Michael exits. He speaks roughly to Alice, and she tells him to go away. He complains about the fickleness of women, but they are soon reconciled. Mosby tells her he knows a painter who can paint a picture with poisoned oils that will kill anyone who looks at it.

The painter, Clarke, enters, and says he will paint such a picture in exchange for Susan's hand in marriage. Mosby agrees. After Mosby tells Clarke that he and Alice do not like the idea of the poisoned picture, Clarke gives them a poison to put in Arden's drink.

Arden and Franklin enter, and Arden asks Mosby why he is in his wife's company. He insults him and plucks Mosby's sword away from him, saying that only gentlemen are allowed to wear one. Mosby asks to be judged by what he is now rather than what he formerly was. Mosby admits he once loved Alice but no longer does. He comes to the

house only because his sister is Alice's maid. Arden accepts this explanation and offers his friendship. Franklin suggests that Mosby should stay away from Arden's house, but Arden says that he should come more often so that everyone may see that he trusts his wife.

Alice enters with breakfast, but Arden thinks there is something wrong with the broth. Alice throws the broth to the ground and laments that nothing she does pleases him. Arden tries to appease her; she protests that she loves him. They appear to be reconciled. Alice demands that he write to her every day from London or she will die of sorrow.

After Arden exits, Alice and Mosby complain about the ineffective poison. Mosby says he cannot continue to love her, since he made an oath to Arden that he would not. Alice protests, but Mosby insists that as long as Arden lives, he will not break his oath. Alice says they will have her husband murdered in the streets of London.

Greene enters and Mosby leaves. Greene is angry that his land has been transferred to Arden. He claims Arden has wronged him and vows revenge. Alice pretends to him that Arden is a bad husband, and she lives in fear of him. Greene takes the bait and is even angrier at Arden. Alice gives him ten pounds to hire someone to kill her husband, promising twenty more when Arden is dead. Greene says he will go immediately to London to arrange for Arden's murder.

After Greene exits, Mosby and Clarke enter. Alice encourages Clarke to woo Susan, telling him that she no longer thinks about Michael. Alice then tells Mosby about what happened in her encounter with Greene. Mosby is concerned that Alice is telling too many people about their plans. Clarke returns, and Mosby asks one favor before he will consent to allowing his sister to marry Clarke. He asks the painter to produce a poisoned crucifix. Clarke agrees to do so within ten days.

Scene 2

On the way to London, Bradshaw, a goldsmith, meets Black Will, with whom he served in the army at Boulogne, on the English Channel. Bradshaw tells Will he is facing trial for handling at his pawnshop a stolen plate belonging to a nobleman, Lord Cheyne. Bradshaw is going to London to find the thief. He describes a man, and Black Will recognizes him as Jack Fitten, who is in prison awaiting trial on other charges. Bradshaw is relieved and resolves to inform Lord Cheyne. Greene gives Bradshaw a letter from Alice and hires Will and his companion Shakebag to murder Arden.

Scene 3

Michael reads a letter he has written to Susan, urging her to return his affection. Arden and Franklin overhear him. Arden is angry that Michael wants to marry Mosby's sister and says he will dismiss her from his service when he returns home.

Greene points out Arden to the hired murderers but tells them to spare Michael. An apprentice at a bookstall shuts the stall and accidentally hits Black Will on the head with the window. In the confusion that follows, Arden escapes, unaware of the plot on his life.

Greene returns and wants to know why Arden has not been killed. Will and Shakebag explain what happened and vow to find another opportunity to carry out the murder.

Michael enters and admits to Black Will he has vowed to kill his master to please Mosby and win Susan's hand in marriage. But Will says that he, Will, is the man who will do the deed. Michael promises to leave the doors of Arden's house in Aldersgate unlocked, but after the others leave, he reveals how troubled he is about betraying his master. But he knows that if he should default on his promise, Will and Shakebag will kill him.

Scene 4

Arden pours out his grief about his unfaithful wife to Franklin, and Franklin tries to comfort him. After Arden and Franklin go to bed, Michael gives expression to his conflicting emotions. He cries out, and Franklin and Arden, roused by the noise, come to see what is wrong. Michael explains he was having a nightmare. Arden discovers the unlocked doors and rebukes Michael for his negligence.

Scene 5

Black Will and Shakebag arrive at Arden's house, only to find the doors locked. They presume Michael has betrayed them and vow to punish him for it. They will watch for him in the morning and carry out their revenge.

Scene 6

Arden tells Franklin that he had a dream in which he was hunted like a deer. He woke up trembling. Franklin tries to reassure him that he was picking up on Michael's fear, but Arden replies that often his dreams come true. They agree to dine together then return to Faversham that evening.

Scene 7

Shakebag and Black Will confront Michael, who swears he left the doors unlocked and it was Franklin who locked them. He tells the assassins they may find Arden at Rainham Down, a village in Kent. They agree to meet later at the Salutation inn, where they will concoct a murder plan.

Scene 8

Mosby soliloquizes about his distressed state of mind. He was happy when he was poor, but now that he is wealthy, he fears he may lose what he has. He looks forward to Arden's death so that he may enjoy Alice, and he also vows to kill Greene and engineer a quarrel between Michael and Clarke so they will kill each other. However, he does not trust Alice, thinking she will be unfaithful to him, so he plans to get rid of her, too.

Alice enters. She is troubled by the planned murder of her husband and tells Mosby she regrets becoming involved with him. She wants to return to being an honest wife and blames Mosby for bewitching her. Mosby curses Alice, saying he passed up the chance of marrying a woman far more beautiful than she, with a large dowry. He claims that he is the one who was bewitched, but the spell is over now. He wonders how he ever thought she was beautiful and tells her to go away. Alice replies that what her friends told her turns out to be true, that he loved her only for her wealth. However, she offers to do penance for offending him and tries to win back his favor. Eventually, Mosby relents and says he will forget their quarrel.

Bradshaw enters with a letter for Alice from Greene, informing her that they have not yet killed Arden but plan to do so soon. Alice and Mosby wish Arden were already dead.

Scene 9

Greene, Will, and Shakebag enter. They are at Rainham Down. The two ruffians quarrel and begin to fight; Greene has to separate them, saying that if they turn on each other, Arden may get away. Greene then leaves, hoping they will accomplish the deed while he is gone.

Arden, Franklin, and Michael enter. Michael pretends his horse is lame and that he must go to Rochester to get a shoe removed. After Michael exits, Franklin continues telling Arden a story about an adulterous woman, but before he can finish, Lord Cheyne enters with his men. He invites Arden and Franklin to his home for supper. Arden politely declines but accepts the invitation Cheyne extends for the following day. Lord Cheyne then spots Black Will, whom he knows as a robber, and rebukes him. Lord Cheyne gets one of his men to give Will a crown and tells him to reform his life.

After Lord Cheyne, Arden, Franklin, and Michael exit, Will and Shakebag grumble about Cheyne's untimely appearance, which came just as they were about to kill Arden. Greene enters, and Will and Shakebag explain what happened. Will promises he will follow Arden back to Faversham and shoot him the next day.

Scene 10

In the early morning at his home in Faversham, Arden tells Alice that he is leaving for the Isle of Sheppey to dine with Lord Cheyne. Alice protests at his departure, and at Franklin's suggestion, Arden invites her to come with them. Alice refuses.

Arden and Franklin depart, while Michael is delayed because, he says, he must look for his lost purse. The real reason is that he knows Arden is going to his death.

Clarke enters, and he and Michael quarrel over Susan. Clarke strikes Michael in the head. Alice, Mosby, and Greene enter, and Alice rebukes Michael. She asks Clarke if he has the poisoned crucifix. Clark replies that he has. Alice and Mosby affirm their love for each other, but Greene is eager to find out whether Shakebag and Will have done their business yet.

Scene 11

Arden and Franklin greet the ferryman, and they go down to the boat. Arden remarks on how misty it is, and the ferryman makes cryptic allusions to the fickleness of women.

Scene 12

Shakebag and Will enter. They have lost their way in the mist but still hope for a chance encounter with Arden. Shakebag falls into a ditch, and the ferryman comes to his assistance. He tells the villains that Arden and Franklin have already departed.

The mist clears as the sun rises, and Greene, Mosby, and Alice enter. Shakebag admits that yet again, Arden has escaped. He says that he and Will will wait there until Arden and Franklin come back. Alice gives them some money so they can go to the Flower-de-Luce and rest. Mosby is discouraged and thinks they should abandon the plot, but Alice proposes that she and Mosby should walk arm-in-arm to meet Arden and thus provoke a quarrel. She can then call out for Shakebag and Will, and Arden will be murdered.

Scene 13

Dick Reede approaches Arden, claiming that Arden has wrongfully taken a plot of land from him, and his wife and children are suffering as a result. Arden threatens to have Reede locked up. Reede curses him and says he will pray for Arden's destruction. After Reede exits, Arden insists that he did him no wrong. As they near home, Arden thinks his wife may perhaps come to meet him.

Alice and Mosby enter, arm-in-arm. To inflame Arden more, they kiss. Enraged, Arden and Franklin draw their swords, as does Mosby. Alice screams for help, and Will and

Shakebag appear. Franklin wounds Shakebag, and Arden wounds Mosby. Mosby, Will, and Shakebag exit, and Alice reproaches Arden for his jealousy, claiming that she and Mosby were coming to meet him in friendship, joining arms only as a way to try his patience. In other words, it was just a joke. Then she complains that he is always misunderstanding her. Arden accepts her explanation and asks to do penance. She asks him to go after Mosby, ensure that his wound is cared for, and apologize to him. Arden asks Alice to come with him as a mediator. Franklin protests, saying it would be dangerous to go to Mosby, but Arden will not listen.

Scene 14

Will, Shakebag, and Greene enter. An exasperated Greene says it is time to give up their plot, since they will never succeed. Shakebag insists they will try again, and Will boasts of his violent exploits in the past and seems amazed that he cannot accomplish the murder of Arden.

Alice and Michael enter. Michael tells Alice that Arden and Mosby are reconciled and that Arden has invited Mosby, Franklin, Bradshaw, Adam Fowle, and others to dinner at his house that night. Alice tells Michael to ask Mosby to come to her and promises him that Susan will be his. Alice also invites Will and Greene to the dinner, and Will tries to explain why their attempt on Arden's life failed; he promises they will stab him in a crowd.

Alice speaks about how she almost murdered her husband in their bedroom. They then discuss the plan hatched by Mosby. Greene is to keep Franklin away from the scene while Mosby and Arden play backgammon. At a given signal, Will and Shakebag will emerge from the countinghouse and commit the murder. Alice gives Will twenty pounds and promises forty more when Arden is dead.

After Will and Shakebag exit, Michael enters. Alice informs him of what is to happen and gives him permission to tell Susan. Michael brings the backgammon tables in as Arden and Mosby enter. Alice pretends that she is not happy to see Mosby and refuses to welcome him. Mosby sits down, and Michael brings wine while Alice continues her pretense of disliking Mosby. Arden and Mosby play backgammon. At the given signal, Will emerges, covers Arden with a towel and pulls him down. Mosby, Shakebag, and Alice all stab him to death. They lay the body in the countinghouse, and Will and Shakebag depart. Susan is summoned to wash the floor of blood, but she cannot get it clean. Nor can Alice, who expresses remorse for her actions.

The guests enter. Alice pretends to be worried because her husband is still out. Susan is concerned that they will all be found out, and Michael seeks poison to kill Alice so she will not betray them. Franklin is suspicious, but all the guests leave. Susan and Alice carry Arden's body in from the countinghouse. Michael announces that the mayor and the watch are on their way to the house. Mosby, Greene, Susan, and Michael carry the body to the fields, and Mosby and Greene go to the Flower-de-luce for the night. The mayor enters with a warrant for the arrest of Black Will; they go to search the house for

him. Franklin brings the news that Arden has been murdered and produces the bloody towel and the knife that Michael failed to dispose of. Alice claims that the blood stains are pig's blood, but Franklin points to other evidence that Arden was murdered in the house. The mayor notices the blood-stained floor. Alice protests, but Franklin orders that Michael and Susan be detained and that someone go to the Flower-de-luce to arrest Mosby.

Scene 15

Shakebag says he sought refuge with an old lover, but she would not admit him. He threw her down the stairs, cut her throat, and robbed her. Now he seeks sanctuary somewhere else.

Scene 16

The mayor urges Alice to confess to the murder, and she does so. Mosby admits he hired Will and Shakebag to murder Arden. Franklin vows they will not escape.

Scene 17

Will can find nowhere to hide in England, so he plans to hide in a boat that is going to Flushing, in Holland.

Scene 18

The mayor enters with the prisoners. Bradshaw has been condemned to death even though he claims, and Alice confirms, that he was unaware of the plot. Mosby and Alice indulge in mutual recriminations. Susan protests that she knew nothing until after the murder. Michael wishes he had never consented to the crime. The mayor condemns Mosby and Susan to be executed at Smithfield in London. Alice will be burnt at the stake in Canterbury. Michael and Bradshaw will be executed in Faversham.

Epilogue

Franklin announces that Shakebag was murdered in Southwark; Black Will was burnt on a scaffold in Flushing; Greene was hanged at Osbridge in Kent. Clarke fled, and the details of his death are unknown. At the spot in the field where Arden's body was laid, the grass did not grow for over two years after the murder.

Characters

Alice Arden

Alice Arden is the ruthless, immoral wife of Thomas Arden. She does not love her husband and is carrying on an affair with Mosby. She is so much in the grip of this passion that she plans and carries out the murder of her husband. She commits this murder even though she recognizes from time to time that Mosby is not a very admirable character. In scene 1, she taunts him as a □Base peasant□ and says she was bewitched by him. Before she fell in love with him, she says, she was deeply in love with her husband. She acknowledges that Arden is a □gentleman□ and that Mosby comes from a lower class. Yet she cannot free herself from her infatuation, which leads her to lie, deceive, and ultimately to murder. After Arden is murdered, Alice is at first filled with remorse, but then she pulls herself together and tries to deceive her guests, saying she is worried about Arden's safety because it is late and her husband has not returned. Then she becomes fearful about what she has done, but her fear quickly turns to a new resolve, and she seems almost gleeful, telling Mosby that they will spend the night □in dalliance and in sport.□ After that, she takes charge of the situation, directing the moving of the body and telling Mosby and Greene how to escape. After Alice is arrested, she repents of her actions. She is sent to Canterbury to be put to death by burning.

Thomas Arden

Thomas Arden, the husband of Alice, has recently become the owner of much land around the Abbey of Faversham, the property having being redistributed by order of the Duke of Somerset. Arden is therefore newly wealthy, but he makes enemies of former small landowners such as Greene and Reede, whose land he has taken. When they complain, he treats them in a high-handed manner, and this contributes to his violent death, since Greene vows to murder him and Reede curses the land that Arden took from him. Arden behaves in a heartless and arrogant way towards those he can control and whom he deems his inferiors. For example, when he finds out that Susan is the subject of the amorous attentions of both Michael and Clarke, he says he will dismiss her from his service. However, Arden is gracious, even obsequious, to his social superior, Lord Cheyne.

Arden is well aware of his wife's infidelity with Mosby, and it causes him great grief. He does not appear to be a bad husband, and it seems he still loves his wife. He is contemptuous of Mosby because of the latter's low social origins. When Mosby and Alice try to manipulate him into believing in their innocence, Arden on the surface goes along with this charade, even offering Mosby his friendship. But he later reveals that he is fully aware of the truth about his wife's conduct: □But she is rooted in her wickedness, / Perverse and stubborn, not to be reclaimed.□ This will cause grief in his heart until the day he dies, he says. Since Arden suspects nothing of the murder plot

(even though he has a dream about a hunt in which he himself becomes the hunted) he is an easy target, the incompetence of the villains notwithstanding.

Black Will

Black Will is one of the low-life criminals hired by Greene to kill Arden. He was once a soldier at Boulogne, but since then has lived a life of crime in London. He likes to boast about his violent ways, telling Greene that □For a cross word of a tapster I have pierced one barrel after another with my dagger and held him by the ears till all his beer hath run out.□ He has run a protection racket in which prostitutes had to pay him a fee before he would allow them to set up a whorehouse. Even Lord Cheyne knows about Black Will's lawless ways and predicts that he will hang one day. Black Will is eager to kill Arden and talks a lot about how it is his destiny to do the deed and how efficiently he is going to do it. When he sees Arden, Franklin, and Michael together, he says he will kill all three of them. When it comes to action, however, Black Will is not so efficient. When a shopfront falls on him, bloodying his head, the whole murder plan is ruined. Still he vows, □From hence ne'er will I wash this bloody stain / Till Arden's heart be panting in my hand.□ His role in the slaughter is to pull Arden down with a towel, allowing the others to stab him. After the murder, Black Will is brought to justice and burnt on a scaffold in Flushing, Holland.

Bradshaw

Bradshaw, a goldsmith, knows Black Will from their time together as soldiers at Boulogne and seems proud of the fact that he now owns his own shop. But Bradshaw is in trouble; he appears unwittingly to have handled a stolen plate belonging to Lord Cheyne and is facing a trial. Will supplies him with information about the thief, that Bradshaw plans to use to get himself acquitted. At the end of the play, Bradshaw is condemned to death for being an accomplice to the murder, even though both he and Alice swear that he knew nothing of it.

Lord Cheyne

Lord Cheyne, a nobleman, appears only in scene 9, when he enters with his men just as Black Will and Shakebag are about to murder Arden. Lord Cheyne is on good terms with Arden and invites him and Franklin to his home for supper. Lord Cheyne also knows Black Will, and when he sees him he rebukes him, saying that he will likely end up hanged. Behaving with the easy assurance of the born aristocrat, Lord Cheyne gives Will a crown and tells him that he must reform his disreputable life.

Clarke

Clarke is a painter who desperately wants to win the hand of Susan, Mosby's sister. He is so unscrupulous that he agrees to Mosby's request to create a painting that will

poison anyone who looks at it. Mosby promises him Susan's hand in return. When Mosby and Alice decide they do not like the idea of a poisoned picture, he agrees to produce a poisoned drink that can be used to kill Arden. After that does not work, Clarke agrees to produce a poisoned crucifix. After the murder, which is actually carried out without any of his materials, Clarke flees, and no details of his fate are known.

Adam Fowle

Adam Fowle, the landlord of the Flower-de-Luce inn, appears in scene 1, bringing a message for Alice from Mosby. Alice gives him a pair of silver dice to take to Mosby.

Franklin

A loyal friend of Thomas Arden, Franklin is the only man to whom Arden can confide his inner thoughts and feelings. Franklin always tries to cheer Arden up. He gives his friend sound advice about how to handle the difficult situation with Alice, suggesting that he treat her gently. He suggests in scene 4, as a way of comforting Arden, that others have to bear greater woes. When Arden says he cannot bear to be in his own house, Franklin invites him to stay with him in London. Just after this, Franklin's soliloquy shows that he has genuine compassion for Arden. After Arden talks about his nightmare, Franklin tries to reassure Arden that it does not mean that anything bad is about to happen to him. Franklin always has Arden's interests at heart, as when he suggests that Mosby stay away from Arden's house. Arden appreciates Franklin and the friendship he offers: □Franklin, thy love prolongs my weary life; / And, but for thee, how odious were this life.□

Greene

Greene is a tenant on land that has recently been passed by higher authority to Arden. Formerly, Greene owned the land on which he lived. He is indignant about the situation because he believes that Arden is being greedy and has cheated him of what is rightfully his. He vows to have his revenge, and Alice pays him money to arrange for Arden's murder in London. It is Greene who hires Shakebag and Black Will to carry out the plan. He gets increasingly exasperated by the incompetence of the two villains and at one point wants to give up the whole enterprise. He has a direct hand in the murder by keeping Franklin away from the scene and then dragging the body out to the fields. He is hanged.

Michael

Michael, Arden's servant, wants to marry Susan, Mosby's sister and for that reason agrees to take part in the plot against Arden. He is also a greedy, immoral man who tells Alice that to win Susan he will even get rid of his elder brother so that ownership of his brother's farm will pass to him and he will be wealthy. Michael agrees to betray his

master to the killers, but he is troubled by his conscience, and in his confusion, he manages unwittingly to foil the plot to kill Arden in his own house. However, he plays a significant role in the actual murder, for which he is condemned to execution in Faversham.

Mosby

Mosby, the lover of Alice Arden, was formerly a low-born tailor, but he has managed to climb the social scale and is now steward in the house of the nobleman, Lord Clifford. He is conscious of his humble origins, and when Arden insultingly reminds him of them, he asks that he should be judged by what he is now, not what he was formerly. Mosby is a determined and ruthless man who is also conscious of the price he has paid for his successful social climbing. He admits that when he was poor he was happy, but now that he has more wealth and prestige, he worries about losing them. He is fully aware of the dangers of the course he is pursuing with Alice in their joint effort to get rid of Arden, but he knows that he cannot pull back from it. He is too much in love with Alice. Mosby is the active planner of the two; it is he who solicits Clarke to produce the poisoned painting, and he is unscrupulous enough to bribe the painter with the promise of marriage to Susan if he does what he is asked. Mosby lies to Arden directly, swearing he has no interest in Alice, but then he has a fit of conscience and tells Alice he cannot court her because he has promised Arden he would not. Although he appears to be sincere in this promise, he soon abandons it.

Mosby reveals the full extent of his cunning and his ruthlessness in his soliloquy in scene 8, when he says he will not be safe even when Arden is dead. Greene and Michael must be killed, too, lest they cause trouble for him. He even decides that he will also have to kill Alice because he does not trust her. He states his ambition clearly with the words, □I sole ruler of mine own.□ He wants to rid himself of anyone who could possibly be a threat to him.

After the murder, Mosby is arrested, and his love of Alice turns to hatred. He is taken to Smithfield, London, to be executed.

Dick Reede

Dick Reede, a sailor and inhabitant of Faversham, appears only in scene 13, when he confronts Arden with a complaint similar to that of Greene. He claims that Arden has taken a plot of land that was his. Although he is going off to sea, he needs the land for his wife and children. Arden tries to brush him off, and Reede responds by cursing the land that Arden took. He says he hopes Arden will be murdered there or meet some other bad end.

Shakebag

Shakebag is one of the two ruffians whom Greene hires to kill Arden. He prides himself on being a vicious cutthroat and boasts that he has stolen more money as a pick-pocket than his partner in crime, Black Will. At one point, he and Will get into a fight with each other. After the murder, in which Shakebag is the second man to stab Arden, Shakebag manages to find sanctuary in some unspecified place, and it appears that he evades capture by the authorities. However, Shakebag meets a bad end, murdered in Southwark.

Susan

Susan is Mosby's sister and Alice Arden's maid. Both Michael and Clarke want to marry her; Michael is even prepared to kill in order to win her hand. After the murder, Susan tries to wash the blood off the floor, and she also helps to move the body. Although she claims that she knew nothing about the plot against Arden until after he had been killed, she is condemned to death and executed at Smithfield in London.

Themes

Awareness of Class Differences

Although only one character in the play is of noble birth (Lord Cheyne), the issue of social class is an important theme. Characters are very conscious of their positions in the social hierarchy. One of the reasons Arden despises Mosby is that the latter was not content to remain in the class in which he was born. He made a living as a humble tailor but then rose through the patronage of a nobleman to become steward in the nobleman's house, a position that gives him considerably more wealth and prestige than he had as a mere repairer of other people's clothes. Mosby also aspires to marrying Alice Arden, who was, as she herself says, □descended of a noble house,□ so that he can rise to an even higher social status.

Arden prides himself on his high social status. □I am by birth a gentleman of blood,□ he tells Franklin, and when he speaks venomously about Mosby, it is Mosby's low social origins that annoy him the most. □She's no companion for so base a groom,□ he says directly to Mosby about Alice. He further taunts Mosby, saying that his rival has no right to wear a sword, because of a statute that bans anyone under the rank of gentleman from doing so. Arden continues to insult Mosby by harping on his former occupation: □Now use your bodkin, / Your Spanish needle, and your pressing iron,□ he says and then calls Mosby a □goodman botcher.□ □Goodman□ was a form of address used to those whose rank was lower than that of a nobleman. Once he has started it, Arden simply cannot stop this line of attack. He insults Mosby as □a velvet drudge□ and □base-minded peasant.□ Curiously, it seems as if Arden's anger is due to Mosby's perceived impertinence in trying to rise above his social origins than to the fact that the former tailor is committing adultery with Arden's wife.

Interestingly, when Mosby tries to defend himself from Arden's verbal attack (□Measure me what I am, not what I was□), the language he uses unconsciously reveals his origins at the very time he is trying to show that he has transcended them, since □measuring□ is what a tailor does. Notably also, when Mosby finally gets to stab Arden, he says, □There's for the pressing iron you told me of,□ as if the insult about his being a former tailor is the reason for the murder, not the fact that Mosby wants the victim's wife for himself.

Alice is also aware of the gap in social status between herself and Mosby and between Mosby and Arden. Like her husband, when she quarrels with her lover, she cannot resist having a dig at his social status: □A mean artificer, that low-born name,□ she says, referring to him.

This awareness of social class extends even to the lower characters. Black Will and Bradshaw served in the military together, but when Will hails him as a fellow and recalls their army days together, Bradshaw says, □O Will, times are changed. No fellows now,□ to which Will replies, □'No fellows now' because you are a goldsmith and have a

little plate in your shop?□ In other words, even though Bradshaw has climbed only a few rungs on the social ladder, he is keenly aware that he has bettered himself and makes sure his old friend knows it.

Greed and Immorality

Consciousness of class differences feeds into another main theme of the play, which is simple greed. People want more than they have and are prepared to do anything to get it. The servant Michael contemplates the murder of his elder brother, who owns a farm, because he thinks this will help him be a worthy husband of Susan. Greene accepts money from Alice in order to hire someone to murder Arden. Bradshaw says of Black Will, □I warrant you he bears so bad a mind / That for a crown he'll murder any man.□

The ruthless, manipulative Alice is acutely aware of how greed for money makes the immoral, pitiless world depicted in the play go round. She knows very well that ruffians may be hired to kill if the price is right: □They shall be soundly fee'd to pay him home,□ meaning that the assassins will be well paid to send Arden to his death. To this end, she offers Greene money and promises more when the deed is done. In scene 14, just before the murder, she promises Will □golden harmony□ (that is, money), in addition to what she has already paid through Greene. Alice seems very much at home in this world where greed overrides morality at every turn. Earlier in the play, she appeals to Mosby's greed when she points out that her husband has saved much money and has gone to London □to unload the goods that shall be thine.□

Arden also contributes to this world of greed. He has been granted a lot of land by the authorities, but he is blind to the social obligations that accompany his good fortune. He treats Greene and Dick Reede without any sympathy or understanding. All he cares about is the fact that his own wealth and power has increased, and the fact that others have been displaced and impoverished as a result is of no interest to him.

The world of the play is, therefore, one in which all sense of decency, of a man's obligations to others and to the social fabric, has been obliterated. It is a dark play with few chinks of light. The only good character is Franklin, and he is completely ineffective in saving his friend Arden.

Style

Arden of Faversham is the first example of a new genre in the history of English drama, the domestic tragedy. Before this play, tragedies had always been about characters of high social rank□kings and nobility. In contrast, the domestic tragedy features characters lower in the social scale. The historical Thomas Arden, for example, although he was a wealthy landowner and the chief citizen of the small town of Faversham, was not a nobleman and appears to have gained his local importance from hard work, a successful career, and the good fortune that came from cultivating relationships with those who had more wealth and power than he did.

Domestic tragedies presented realistic scenes from ordinary life. The plot usually centered on a murder and was based on an actual crime in recent history that had been recorded in a chronicle, a ballad, or pamphlet. Domestic tragedy evolved from the traditional morality play. It offered moral lessons to the audience by presenting them with people whom they could recognize as members of their own societies. The emphasis is often on sin and punishment, as in *Arden of Faversham*, but domestic tragedies also explore matters of forgiveness and repentance.

Noting that domestic tragedy appealed to the large middle-class element in the audience, Madeleine Doran writes that the genre □has the characteristics of bourgeois literature in its heavy moral emphasis and in its combination of sensationalism and sentiment.□

Other domestic tragedies include Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (acted in 1603) and the anonymous *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (1608).

Historical Context

The Murder in Faversham

The historical Thomas Arden, like the dramatic version of him in the play, was a man who knew how to climb the social ladder. The year of Arden's birth is unknown, but it appears he came from a good family. He soon rose to prominence, serving Sir Edward North in the court appointed by Henry VIII to arrange for the dispersal of church lands after the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538. Arden married well, from a social point of view, since his bride, reported to be many years younger than he, was the stepdaughter of Sir Edward. After the marriage, Arden was placed in charge of customs at the thriving port of Faversham, in Kent. This was a lucrative position at the time. Arden also received, as the play makes clear, some lands that had formerly been the property of the abbey at Faversham. He was mayor of Faversham in 1548, and at the time of his murder in 1551, he was the most powerful citizen in the town.

The murder took place in Arden's parlor at about seven o'clock in the evening on Sunday, February 15. It was a cold night and snow lay on the ground. When the news of the murder spread, it caused quite a stir, both locally and nationally. Then as now, a crime with sensational elements□a wife and her lover conspiring with ruffians to murder the wife's wealthy husband□was food for gossip and moralizing for many years to come. The crime even reached the attention of the historian Raphael Holinshed, who allowed himself a four-page digression in his *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587) in which to tell the story.

Holinshed's work was the source used by the author of *Arden of Faversham* to write the play. Although the anonymous dramatist was entirely dependent on Holinshed for his plot, he also shaped the historian's narrative for his own dramatic purposes. The character Franklin, for example, does not appear in Holinshed; it is likely that the dramatist created him in order to give Arden someone to whom he could confess his feelings. The dramatist also invented the ferryman, while eliminating Arden's daughters, who are mentioned by Holinshed. The dramatist also enlarged the role of Shakebag, who is mentioned in Holinshed only a few times, with no details. The dramatist also developed more fully the characters of Arden, Alice, and Mosby, carefully exploring their motives. In some other respects, however, Holinshed gave more details of the event than the dramatist. His description of the murder is particularly lurid. As Holinshed told it, Black Will covered Arden's neck with the towel in order to strangle him, and then Mosby hit him on the head with a fourteen-pound pressing iron. Arden fell down groaning. He was still alive when they carried him to the countinghouse, where he continued to groan until Black Will slashed him in the face, killing him. Black Will then took all the money from Arden's purse and removed the rings from the dead man's fingers. Then as he left the countinghouse, he demanded his money from Alice, and she duly handed over ten pounds.

Elizabethan Drama

Arden of Faversham was written and performed during the Elizabethan Age, the period when Queen Elizabeth I was on the throne of England (1558-1603). The last two decades of Elizabeth's reign produced the golden age of English drama, which is known principally for the plays of William Shakespeare. During this period, there were a number of large public theaters in London, some holding as many as three thousand spectators. The capacity of the Globe theater, for which Shakespeare wrote many of his plays, was just over two thousand.

The stage was a small platform surrounded on three sides by the audience. Conditions were cramped. At the Globe, no spectator was more than fifty feet from the actors, and those who stood at the front in the yard (the standees were known as groundlings) could rest their arms on the stage. The price of admission to the theater was cheap. The groundlings could get in for only one penny, which even the artisan class could afford. It is estimated that about one in ten Londoners attended a play every week, and the audience was a large cross-section of society. The theaters were open to the elements, but there is no record of any play being rained off. The performance simply continued, rain or shine.

Elizabethan drama evolved out of a number of earlier elements, including medieval morality plays and a kind of drama known as the interlude, which arose in the late fifteenth century and stimulated the secularization of the drama. Another influence was classical Roman drama, including Seneca (for tragedy) and Plautus and Terence (for comedy). Also, during the sixteenth century, a tradition developed in England of writing and performing plays at universities. Many of these playwrights, known as the University Wits, later went to London and wrote for the public stage. This was from the late 1580s, around the time *Arden of Faversham* was written, until the mid-1590s. The greatest of these university-educated men was Christopher Marlowe; others were Robert Greene, Thomas Nash, and Thomas Kyd. These playwrights had an innovative approach to tragedy and also developed the use of blank verse (a form used effectively by the author of *Arden of Faversham*), which was then taken to its highest form of expression by Shakespeare. However, by no means all the dramatists who wrote for the Elizabethan stage were university educated. Shakespeare himself, who was probably educated at Stratford Grammar School, is believed to have had no other formal education.

The principle genres in Elizabethan drama are the history play, such as Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Henry V*; tragedy, such as Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (which was part of a subgenre known as revenge tragedy); and comedy, including such plays as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Critical Overview

There are no records of any production of *Arden of Faversham* until the eighteenth century, but it is likely that the play was a popular one, performed frequently both before and after its publication in 1592. It was published again in 1599 and 1633. The first documented performance was in 1730, at Faversham, in Kent.

During the twentieth century, there were many productions of *Arden of Faversham*. In 1970, the play was directed by a Romanian, Andrei Sherban, for the La Mama Experimental Theatre Club in New York. Clive Barnes comments in a review in the *New York Times* that the production expresses a worldview □so savage in its necessities that survival itself becomes the solitary virtue□ (quoted in Wine's edition of the play).

A 1990 production in London's Old Red Lion Theatre, mounted by Classics on a Shoestring and directed by Katie Mitchell, was reviewed in the London *Times* by Jeremy Kingston. Kingston was not impressed by the play itself, which he refers to as a □foolishly earnest drama.□ Commenting on the many unsuccessful attempts by the villains to murder Arden, Kingston writes:

So protracted is this business of trying to shuffle off his mortal coil that I am inclined to picture a Bankside mogul slamming the first draft down on a tavern table with the words, □I'll tell you something, Mr. Anon. You wanna write a good show; you gotta delay your climax.□

Kingston also comments on the performance of Ian Reddington, who □characterises Arden with the realistic detail of a nervy businessman, rubbing his fingers and bravely smiling.□

In 2004, the Metropolitan Playhouse in New York City staged a production of the play, directed by Alex Roe. Mary Bly, who reviewed the production favorably for the *Shakespeare Bulletin*, comments that the play was presented as more comedy than tragedy: □Once a performance whose moral resonance extended into every household, it is now limited to the local and silly.□ Bly makes the point that a modern audience, with quite different sexual and moral values than were common during the sixteenth century, can no longer take the play seriously as a stern warning against the sin of adultery.

One reason for the comic effect of this production was that the director, building on what Bly describes as the □homosocial nature of early modern culture□ (male friends address each other in intimate terms of endearment) offered a production with homosexual overtones:

Tod Mason, as Arden, swishes onto the stage in a little midnight blue velvet miniskirt dress with gold buttons. He dresses with the prim enthusiasm of a society matron. . . . If there was an early modern closet, he's not very far into it. . . . Franklin, played by Jason Alan Griffin, is a muscled sidekick in lavender stockings who acts a bewildered Watson to Arden's fluttering Judy Garland.

When the pair are awakened from sleep by Michael's shouting, Arden trots onto the stage in a laced pale blue nightgown, clutching a teddy bear; Franklin is bare-chested and annoyed.

Comedy aside, Bly has high praise for Mason's truly brilliant performance as Arden, which allowed the audience to both like and mistrust him. Bly comments further:

Mason manages to bring out the uncaring side of the character's nature. Arden here is a sort of righteous evangelical: capable of great brutality, enacted with the solemn and cheerful resolution that he is in the right.

For over four centuries after its publication, *Arden of Faversham* has shown its staying power. It will likely be staged many times during the twenty-first century, in new and challenging interpretations.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many essays on drama. In the following essay, he discusses why some scholars argue that Arden of Faversham *was quite possibly written by William Shakespeare.*

Although lovers of Elizabethan drama might be able to locate and attend one of the infrequent productions of *Arden of Faversham*, it is more likely that they will be compelled to study this fascinating play at home or in a library. Perhaps with some help from reviews of past productions, readers will have to imagine for themselves how the callous landowner Arden, his adulterous wife Alice, the social climber Mosby, and the villains Shakebag and Black Will might be effectively presented on a modern stage. But given the structure of the plot, this may be no easy task. In *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy*, no less an authority than M. C. Bradbrook, a renowned scholar of Elizabethan drama, put on record her own reaction to the play. She notes that there are six unsuccessful attempts on the life of Arden □until the spectator feels positively irritated that she [Alice] should not succeed.□ Bradbrook also points out, however, that in repeatedly postponing the fatal moment, the author of *Arden of Faversham* was making use of a popular device in Elizabethan drama, the □cumulative plot,□ in which □the same type of incident was repeated again and again, in a crescendo and with quickening tempo, up to the catastrophe.□ Bradbrook notes that Marlowe, in *Tamburlaine the Great*, uses a similar device, although she makes no mention of any play by Shakespeare, the greatest Elizabethan dramatist of them all, that employs it.

Shakespeare's name has often been mentioned in connection with the anonymous *Arden of Faversham*, and indeed, for many readers, part of the interest the play holds lies in the possibility that it might just be a work by Shakespeare. It seems highly likely that Shakespeare would have known the story of the murder at Faversham, since it appears in Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), which was Shakespeare's source for his history plays. Shakespeare knew Holinshed's work well.

In 1940, Marion Bodwell Smith, in *Marlowe's Imagery and the Marlowe Canon*, made the intriguing argument that the imagery in *Arden of Faversham* calls to mind the imagery used by Shakespeare in his early plays, especially the histories. According to the classification made by Smith, over one-third of the images in *Arden of Faversham* are drawn from daily life, especially the □daily occupations and trades, from sports, and from war.□ The sports images are taken from archery, riding, and the hunting of birds. Smith notes that, similarly, many of Shakespeare's images from daily life are drawn from sport. She highlights several images of bird hunting. Greene's comment to Black Will, for example, □Lime your twigs to catch this weary bird□ is an image that occurs frequently in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* trilogy. Smith also argues that the images of the unweeded or untended garden in *Arden of Faversham* recall the frequent use of similar images in Shakespeare's histories from the *Henry VI* trilogy to *Richard II*. Smith claims that not only single images but whole passages in *Arden of Faversham* are reminiscent of the early Shakespeare. As an example, she cites Arden's dream and compares it to Clarence's dream in act 1, scene 4 of Shakespeare's *Richard III*.

Some may find this evidence by itself to be less than convincing□the unweeded garden as an image of a misgoverned society was a commonplace during the period□and Smith herself did not claim to have proved that Shakespeare wrote *Arden of Faversham*, only that the imagery □point[s] in his direction.□

However, the case for Shakespearean authorship has been argued from other aspects of the play. The characterization has been widely admired, and some scholars believe that such an achievement would have been beyond the capabilities of any other dramatist of the period. The inner conflicts of the characters are laid bare, and they emerge as multi-dimensional figures rather than simple portraits of people in the grip of evil passions. Even the servant Michael, a comparatively minor character, is presented in scene 4 as being torn by his conscience over his betrayal of his master. He has sufficient self-awareness to know that his actions are contemptible, even if he does not have the courage or the moral strength to change them. Also, his comment, □My master's kindness pleads to me for life,□ suggests in passing another dimension to the character of Arden. Arden may be callous and avaricious, but it appears that at least he treats his servant well. Other aspects of the play also modify the negative impression Arden creates by his ill-treatment of Greene and Dick Reede. His friend Franklin is completely loyal to him; he undoubtedly loves his wife dearly (as she herself attests), and once, before she became entranced by Mosby, she loved him; and he is on good terms with Lord Cheyne, who insists on inviting him to dinner. These small hints all suggest that although Arden may not be a fully sympathetic character, he may not quite deserve the cruel end he meets either.

Scholars often refer to scene 8 when they discuss the dramatist's in-depth characterization. In this scene, Alice and Mosby quarrel and are reconciled. It begins with a forty-three line soliloquy by Mosby. (A soliloquy is a dramatic convention in which a character, alone on the stage, speaks his thoughts aloud.) Often in drama, when a character bares his soul in a soliloquy he immediately becomes more sympathetic to the audience, which gets a glimpse of his full humanness. A well-known example is King Claudius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, who appears little more than a stage villain until he reveals his own troubled soul in his soliloquy in act 3, scene 3. Like Claudius, Mosby begins his soliloquy by revealing his □troubled mind . . . stuffed with discontent.□ He has sufficient self-awareness to know that his newfound wealth and prestige has brought him neither happiness nor peace and that his □golden time□ was in fact when he was poor. He is also aware of the dangerous course on which he is set with Alice, but he is so much in the grip of his passion and his hopes for social advancement that he knows he cannot turn back. But whatever sympathy he may generate in the audience by these honest self-revelations, it is soon dissipated. As he speaks not only of the murder of Arden but also of his desire to be rid of Greene, Michael, and even Alice herself, he shows himself to be a frightened soul, terrified of losing what he has and without any moral compass to guide him. Mosby has lost control of his own destiny, and the harder he tries to control it the more helpless he becomes. Like Shakespeare's Macbeth, he knows he will be led on from one evil deed to another, compelled by the dark logic of his own insecurities. Isolated and desperate, Mosby is a very dangerous man.

When Alice enters, part of the dynamic that propels her relationship with Mosby is revealed. They seem to be engaged in a mutually manipulative dance. When he sees her holding a prayer book, Mosby guesses that something is wrong and says, at the end of his soliloquy, that he must flatter her. He thinks that Alice is putting on a show of sadness in order to hurt him emotionally, and he tells her so. But she surprises him by revealing her guilty feelings about their adulterous affair. If she is sincere, this adds a dimension to her character that the audience has not seen before. She knows that what she is doing with Mosby is wrong; she is ashamed of it and can hardly bear to speak about it. After she broaches the subject of how much her husband loves her, she continues:

And then□conceal the rest, for 'tis too bad,

Lest that my words be carried with the wind

And published in the world to both our shames.

She tells Mosby that their affair must end□is she being genuine or manipulative, the audience wonders□and then blames him for bewitching her. He responds by blaming *her* for bewitching *him*; it appears that any self-understanding that might emerge from this encounter is about to be buried by mutual finger-pointing. As the scene continues, it does seem that it is Alice who emerges with the upper hand by making a show of submission. She may well be the stronger character of the two. She continues to manipulate Mosby emotionally, saying she will do penance for offending him, that she will kill herself unless he looks at her. Then quite shamelessly, knowing his weakness, she flatters him:

Thou hast been sighted as the eagle is,

And heard as quickly as the fearful hare,

And spoke as smoothly as an orator,

When I have bid thee hear or see or speak.

When that does not seem to work, she flatters him again (□Sweet Mosby is as gentle as a king□), finally managing to win him back by appeasing his insecurities about his low-born origins (which she had herself used against him only a few moments earlier). Having lost the initiative, Mosby is defenseless against her manipulation. Even as he knows what she is doing, he is powerless to resist this complex and strong-willed woman, whose emotions seem to change rapidly□a quality that is seen again in the murder scene when remorse, fear, defiance, and cunning all show themselves in her in the space of a few minutes.

It is characterization like this that has prompted comparisons between Alice Arden and some of the great Shakespearean female characters, such as Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. Lovers of Shakespeare may be tempted to go even further. Who could not be tempted by the hope that in the comic roguery of Black Will and Shakebag, the

audience is seeing the predecessors of those immortal denizens of the Boar's Head in Eastcheap, especially the braggart soldier Pistol, boisterous companion of Sir John Falstaff in *Henry IV, part 2*? Unfortunately, pending some sensational find of an old manuscript in the attic of a country house somewhere in England that would definitively identify the author of *Arden of Faversham*, readers will never know for sure.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *Arden of Faversham*, in *Drama for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Critical Essay #2

Robinson has a Master of Arts in English. She is a writer and editor and a former teacher of English literature and creative writing. In the following essay, Robinson examines how Arden of Faversham *portrays a world in chaos, both on the individual and societal levels.*

The opening exchange of *Arden of Faversham* sets up the framework of values for the rest of the play. Franklin tells a melancholy Arden to cheer up because he has been granted the lands of the Abbey of Faversham. Franklin's remark implies that for men like Arden, happiness is contingent upon the acquisition of land. As becomes clear in the rest of the play, Arden's greed for land ruins the livelihoods and happiness of others, causing so much resentment as to provide one character, Greene, with a motive for murder.

The exchange comments on a process of change in land ownership that was occurring in England at the time the play was set (1551) and that was still a topic of contention at the time it was written (most commentators suggest a date between 1587 and 1591). This process of change caused immense social upheaval. As much as 90 percent of the population lived directly off the land, so the question of who owned it could mean the difference between life and death. Such questions were raised by the life of the historical figure Thomas Arden, whose story the play dramatizes. In many ways, he was a man typical of the Tudor period. He enjoyed success in his career working for Sir Edward North, who had obtained land and wealth from King Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries (1538-1541). The dissolution is the process by which the monasteries and their land holdings were broken up and confiscated by the crown, to be sold off or granted to the king's favorites. Prior to the dissolution, much of the monasteries' land had been leased to tenant farmers. The historical Thomas Arden made a good marriage to Alice, Sir Edward's stepdaughter, and obtained the land and revenues of the Abbey of Faversham from Sir Thomas Cheiny, who had received it from Henry VIII. Thomas Arden moved into a house on the land and, according to Lionel Cust, cited by Martin White in his Introduction to *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, □continued to amass wealth and dispossess the other owners of Abbey lands, until he became the foremost citizen in Faversham.□

Criticism of men like the historical Thomas Arden was widespread and bitter. A □Prayer for Landlords□ was even included in the 1553 *Book of Private Prayer*. White, in his Introduction, cites the prayer as follows:

We heartily pray thee, to send thy holy Spirit into the hearts of them that possess the grounds, pastures, and dwelling places of the earth, that they . . . may not rack and stretch out the rents of their houses and lands . . . after the manner of covetous worldlings.

The playwright of *Arden of Faversham* portrays the age as characterized by covetousness. Its most successful proponent is Arden, though the other characters

follow suit. Arden's first conversation with Alice is preceded and followed by talk of commodities and trade. Just as Arden covets and acquires goods and land, Mosby covets and acquires Alice. Alice covets Mosby. In an attempt to obtain him, she over-reaches herself, hiring no less than three potential assassins□Michael, Clarke, and Greene, whom she advises to subcontract the work to □some cutter□□to rid her of her husband.

People have become commodities, to be desired, bought, hired, stolen, or bartered. When Arden challenges Mosby over his relationship with Alice, he speaks of her as if she were as much a commodity as the land he owns: □But I must have a mandate for my wife; / They say you seek to rob me of her love.□ A □mandate□ is a deed of ownership. Mosby seeks to rob Arden of Alice, just as Arden robs others of their land. Alice claims that Mosby has □rifled□ her of her good reputation, using terminology that is usually applied to robberies. Human values are reduced to the level of material goods. Alice shows herself to be even more ruthless a businesswoman than Arden when she barters away Susan Mosby as payment for the promised assassination of her husband. Even in this deal, there is no honor, as Alice double-deals, selling Susan to two men, Michael and Clarke. She is willing to let her go to the one who does the job of killing Arden first. Mosby and Alice's courtship involves playing at dice for kisses in place of the usual money.

In the context of this grim and heartless trading of commodities, the holy sacrament of marriage, which belongs in a more spiritual realm, is dismissed by Alice as being □but words□: □Oaths are words, and words is wind, / And wind is mutable.□ In *Arden of Faversham*, that which should be eternal is expendable, and that which is transient rules supreme. This development is portrayed as being against the natural order of things and as symptomatic of societal breakdown.

Arden's remarks to Franklin about Mosby reveal another aspect of the social upheaval of the time: increased social mobility of the classes. Though Arden has profited from the changes in land ownership, he resents the social mobility that has come with it. Arden contemptuously dismisses Mosby as a □botcher, and no better at the first,□ who has □Crept into service of a nobleman□ by flattery. He looks down upon Mosby because he is in trade (a tailor) and of lowly birth, unlike Arden, who, as a member of the landowning classes and □a gentleman of blood,□ believes himself superior. Arden is as angry about Mosby's social climbing, his usurpation of the accoutrements of gentility and nobility, as he is about his stealing his wife. Arden repeatedly insults Mosby for his low birth and status as a tailor, calling him □a velvet drudge,□ a □base-minded peasant,□ and □so base a groom.□ He humiliates Mosby during their quarrel over Alice by pointing out that by law, Mosby, being below the rank of a gentleman, is not allowed to wear a sword. Arden's confiscation of Mosby's sword at a moment when Mosby is threatening Arden symbolizes unmanning or castration. Arden again taunts Mosby with his tradesman status, telling him to use his tailor's needle and clothes pressing iron instead of the sword.

This, as it turns out, is a fatal insult. In the murder scene (scene 14), Mosby uses his iron to deliver one of the blows that kills Arden, in revenge □for the pressing iron you

told me of.□ This is Mosby's acknowledgement that the enmity between him and Arden is more about class warfare than overwhelming love or desire for Alice.

From his side, though Mosby claims to have loved Alice once, his soliloquy in scene 8 suggests that in his affair with her, a woman of higher social rank, he is primarily motivated by ambition □to build my nest among the clouds.□ His choice of monetary language when he tells her that he has □wrapped my credit in thy company□ confirms this. Alice implicitly acknowledges his ulterior motives when she soothes him into making up their quarrel by calling him □as gentle as a king,□ with □gentle□ meaning □of noble birth□; she is appealing to his desire for higher social status. Because their relationship is not founded on love, but on self-interest□from her side, sexual passion, and from his, ambition, covetousness, and greed□he does not trust her. He also reveals in his soliloquy that he believes she will dispose of him even as she disposed of Arden, and so he plans to get rid of her, though whether he means to abandon her or to kill her is not made clear. The point is that in a world that has elevated self-interest above humane considerations, even close relationships have changed their nature. No longer safe refuges from the perils of the world, they have become the very center of danger and betrayal. As Mosby comments, □'Tis fearful sleeping in a serpent's bed.□

Another inversion of the natural order in relationships is seen in the suborning of Michael. As Arden's servant, Michael should protect his master, particularly as Michael admits that Arden has always been kind and generous to him. But he allows himself to be bribed by Alice to kill Arden, with Susan as the prize. Later he is persuaded by Black Will and Shakebag to leave the doors of Arden's house unlocked so that they can enter and kill him.

The playwright frequently uses the imagery of hunting, or of predator and prey, to emphasize the dehumanizing effects of this society of greed and appetite. Several characters in the play hunt Arden in order to kill him. The symbolism is heavily emphasized in Arden's dream of being hunted in scene 6. An Elizabethan audience would assume that it is part of the natural order for people to hunt animals, but not for people to hunt people, particularly for a servant such as Michael to hunt his master. Michael's soliloquy in scene 3 speaks of Arden as a □lamb,□ an image of innocence that connotes Christ, the Lamb of God. Michael has become a predator, □The hunger-bitten wolf□ who □takes advantage to eat him up.□ However, there is an ambiguity even in this image that is typical of this play. The wolf that stalks Arden is □hunger-bitten,□ a reference, perhaps, to those people, embodied in the character of Reede (scene 13), whom Arden has caused to go hungry by taking their land. That this reference is deliberate is reinforced by Shakebag's similar description of himself as Arden's potential assassin as □the starven lioness.□ These images suggest that while predators such as Shakebag and Michael are brutal in their desire for Arden's death and bestial in their ruthless appetite for material reward, their brutality and bestiality is a grosser manifestation of the more civilized greed of men such as Arden. Michael's characterization of Arden as □harmless□ as a lamb is ironically undermined by Arden's seeming willingness to let Reede's family starve. The irony is driven home by the fact that when Arden brutally dismisses Reede, he and Franklin have just returned from enjoying sumptuous hospitality at Lord Cheiny's and are looking forward to a supper

cooked by Alice. This expectation in turn is ironically subverted by the audience's knowledge that on his return home he is likely to be served not with a delicious meal, but with death.

In spite of the ambiguous light in which Arden is presented, there is no question of his deserving his grisly fate. Yet a beneficent power seems to be trying to prevent it. Time and again, when he is being stalked by Black Will and Shakebag, fate appears to intervene to save his life. For example, Michael's attempt to leave the doors of Arden's house open to allow the assassins to enter fails when Michael's drowsy cry of fear rouses his master and Franklin, who then lock the doors. This is not mere chance at work: Michael's troubled conscience gives him bad dreams of robbers. On another occasion, Black Will is prevented from killing Arden by a shopkeeper's window dropping onto his head; on yet another occasion, a fog prevents Black Will and Shakebag from seeing Arden until he has safely passed. A bemused Black Will can only conclude that □doubtless he is preserved by miracle.□ Fate in this play is not neutral but a manifestation of divinely ordered justice, in which the innocent enjoy a degree of divine protection and the wicked are punished. This is in line with the unabashedly moralistic title page of the play, which describes the play as showing □the great malice and discimulation of a wicked woman, the unsatiable desire of filthie lust and the shamefull end of all murderers.□

In this context, Alice and Mosby subvert the divine order with their unnatural and unsanctified love. This is expressed by various inversions of Christian belief connected with these characters. They commission a poisoned crucifix from Clarke the painter. The crucifix is designed to kill whoever looks at it, and Alice and Mosby intend that this will be Arden. The irony lies in the inversion of the Christian belief that Christ died on the cross for the sins of mankind in order to give man eternal life. In this instance, Alice and Mosby are using the symbol of the giver of life to bring about Arden's death. The religious symbolism continues in scene 8, when Alice meets Mosby with a prayer book in her hands. Here, she has moments of repentance. In an ugly episode of mutual recrimination, each accuses the other of bewitchment, a serious charge in an era when witchcraft was punishable by death. Mosby calls Alice □unhallowed.□ His reference to her as a □serpent□ connects her with the devil, who tempted Eve in the Biblical Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent. Alice quickly makes up her quarrel with Mosby, but in a way that an Elizabethan audience would have viewed as irreligious. First, she threatens to kill herself, though suicide was widely believed to be a cardinal sin against God. Then, she offers to do penance for offending Mosby and to worship him and threatens to burn her prayer book. Alice thereby places her lover in a position rightly occupied by God and Christ, an act of blasphemy.

In this disordered universe, there is no final restoration to order, no triumph of love and forgiveness. Arden's dead body is first dragged onto the Abbey lands that caused so much contention and is then laid in his counting house, a striking image weighty with symbolism that sums up the life of one whose preoccupation was the acquisition of land and wealth. After Arden's murder, Alice's repentance in scene 16 is unconvincing. It comes only after all her attempts to cover up her guilt have failed and consists mostly of attempting to insinuate her way into her dead husband's favor in much the same

manner that she employed during his life. Mosby expresses only disgust for Alice, wanting only to get away from □that strumpet,□ and curses all women. Susan feels that she is a victim of injustice, and Michael proclaims that he does not care about heaven as long as he dies with Susan. Nothing of value has been gained or learned by any of the characters. For all its moral lessons and apparent justice, *Arden of Faversham* is a pessimistic play, its end showing a world that remains in the grip of the inverted values that governed the characters throughout.

Source: Claire Robinson, Critical Essay on *Arden of Faversham*, in *Drama for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2007.

Adaptations

In 1799, the Sadler's Wells Company in London transformed *Arden of Faversham* into a ballet.

In 1967, Alexander Goehr's opera, *Arden Must Die*, commissioned by the Hamburg State Opera, received its first performance. The play was not available as of 2006 on either VHS tape or DVD.

Topics for Further Study

Research the dissolution of the monasteries in England that took place between 1538 and 1541. Write an essay in which you explain why Henry VIII closed the monasteries. What were the consequences for English society and culture, and how is that shown in *Arden of Faversham*?

Reread the play and pick out your three favorite passages of two to ten lines or more. Explain to the class why you like these quotations. What appeals to you about the use of language in them? Then select from your favorite Shakespeare play three of the most memorable short passages. Read them to the class also, explaining the dramatic context in which they occur. Whose lines are more memorable□Shakespeare's or those of the anonymous author of *Arden of Faversham*? Explain your answer.

After the sensational murder in Faversham in 1551, Alice's story was told in a popular ballad. Team up with one other student and write a ballad or other type of song in which you tell Alice's story. Perform your song for the class.

Read Holinshed's account of Arden's murder in his *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. You can find this account in the appendices to both editions of the play mentioned in this chapter. Write an essay in which you show how the dramatist handled his source material. Did he stay close to Holinshed's account in every way? In what ways did he shape the material to make powerful drama? Make sure you mention the character Dick Reede in your essay. How does the dramatist seize on this small detail in Holinshed and make it dramatic?

Compare and Contrast

1590s: In the Elizabethan theater, plays take place in the afternoon, in natural light. The audience is boisterous and unruly, surrounds the actors on three sides, and interacts with them. All classes of society attend the theater.

Today: Plays take place in a darkened theater, and the largely middle-class audiences are generally more subdued than their Elizabethan counterparts. Talking during the performance is frowned upon. There is a convention of the fourth wall that describes the invisible barrier between stage and audience; the performers act as if the audience does not exist.

1590s: Having defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, England is a strong and united kingdom under the capable leadership of Queen Elizabeth 1. English sailors explore the world and begin to lay the basis for the nation's emergence as a powerful maritime and colonial power.

Today: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is no longer a colonial power. Having given up its empire by the mid-twentieth century, it is now a member of the European Community. Britain has retained its monarchy, however, and Elizabeth II is a popular queen, although her power is merely symbolic. English people remain extremely proud of the Elizabethan era which they regard as a golden age in their history.

1590s: The English language undergoes a period of rapid development and attains a new richness and flexibility in expression. Shakespeare in particular molds and expands the English tongue, introducing many new words into the language. However, English is spoken only by between five and seven million English people.

Today: English is the dominant world language. It is used by at least 750 million people and possibly as many as one billion. It is more widely spoken and written than any language in history.

What Do I Read Next?

A Yorkshire Tragedy, a play by Thomas Middleton, is available in a reprint edition published by Kessinger Publishing (2004). The play was first published in 1608 and is classified as a Jacobean domestic tragedy. Like *Arden of Faversham*, it is based on an actual incident. In the county of Yorkshire, England, in 1605, a cruel, violent husband, addicted to gambling, finally repents but, stricken by shame, kills his two children and wounds his wife.

The Witch of Edmonton, a play by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, was first performed in December 1621 or possibly earlier. It is a domestic tragedy, based on a story of betrayal and deceit. The witch of the title was based on Elizabeth Sawyer, who was hanged for witchcraft in 1621 after a frenzied witch hunt swept through her community. The dramatists were quick to see the dramatic potential in the sensational story, and the play was performed within a few months of the actual event. The play is available in a well-annotated edition, edited by Peter Corbin and Dekker Sedge and published by Manchester University Press (1999).

Plays on Women (Manchester University Press, Student edition, 2000), edited by Kathleen McCluskie, includes four Elizabethan plays in which women play a variety of prominent roles, ranging from adulteresses to victims and faithful wives. The plays are *Arden of Faversham*; *The Roaring Girl*, by Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker; Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (known as a city comedy); and Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (a domestic tragedy).

The Death of a Salesman, by Arthur Miller, is one of the best examples of a modern tragedy in which the protagonist is not a high-ranking hero but an ordinary man. First published in 1949, it is available in a Penguin edition (1998). The salesman of the title is the self-deluded Willy Loman. Some have seen him as a pathetic figure, but Miller himself believed that Willy attained tragic status. The Penguin edition contains, in addition to the text of the play, a chronology of its productions, photos from various stagings, and a new preface by the playwright.

Further Study

Reynolds, George Fullmer, *The Staging of Elizabethan Plays at the Red Bull Theater, 1605-1625*, Modern Language Association of America, 1940, reprint Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1966, pp. 115-21.

Reynolds analyzes how the play was staged in the Elizabethan Age, emphasizing the use of the stage doors, which are significant in every scene.

Schutzman, Julie R., □Alice Arden's Freedom and the Suspended Moment of *Arden of Faversham*,□ in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Spring 1996, pp. 289-314.

Schutzman argues that although Alice Arden ends up suffering the death penalty, she was able to exercise her will by subverting and manipulating the patriarchal social order that curtailed women's freedom to act as autonomous agents.

Sullivan, Garrett A., Jr., □'Arden Lay Murdered in that Plot of Ground': Surveying, Land and *Arden of Faversham*,□ in *ELH*, Vol. 61, No. 2, Summer 1994, pp. 231-52.

Sullivan examines the concept of land in the play. In the Elizabethan era, technological innovations in the science of estate surveying threatened to reduce land to a commodity to be sold and manipulated. The play offered a near-metaphysical view of land as a force that can be offended and which also has the power to punish covetousness and social irresponsibility.

Youngblood, Sarah, □Theme and Imagery in *Arden of Feversham*,□ in *Studies in English Literature*, Vol. 3, 1963, pp. 207-18.

Youngblood shows how distorted or perverted images from religion and nature reinforce the theme of moral degeneration and lack of spiritual growth.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's"For Students" Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently

studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals— helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man–the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

"Night." Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the "Criticism" subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on "Winesburg, Ohio." Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

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Malak, Amin. "Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition," Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. "Richard Wright: "Wearing the Mask," in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

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