

Daily Mail (London)

November 3, 1994

FROM SIXTIES ROOTS, OAKES GROWS MIGHTY

BYLINE: Jack Tinker

"[Meredith Oakes'] is a savage, satirical world, where the meek inherit nothing and are even tricked out of their redundancy pay. Her polished and eloquent play is set in the fast-disappearing world of the small literary magazine, a symbol, surely, of that eccentric English enterprise and national identity which has been all but crushed under the accountants' jackboot of the market economy.... Abruptly relocated from the faded grandeur of their old home, the small, fractious team which produced the idiosyncratic Footnotes in History are swallowed up in the giant march of corporate takeover.... As did Orton, she has her figure of unimpeachable moral integrity, the splendid Prunella Scales. A figure of dowdy heroism, she represents the last vestige of loyalty and decency in their beleaguered little world. And she is its first victim.

Alan Howard, reinventing the impressive authority which made him such a force in the RSC, gives the tinpot tyrant a saving note of humanity when he, too, is crushed underfoot by unworthy foes.

Chief of these is the [Joe] Ortonesque Tom Hollander, a wonderfully unlikely sex object who exploits his ambidexterity in this department with a combination of knowing innocence and rapacious ambition.