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[See table of contents](#)

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Article abstract

This essay demonstrates that *Arden of Faversham* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness* explore important tensions in the Elizabethan understanding of the lived experience of the damned. Calvinist theologians tended to describe reprobation in terms that unintentionally suggested direct divine agency and responsibility, despite their insistence that culpability for sin lies in human nature. Aligning closely with Calvinist visions of reprobation, the plays characterize their villains as feeling compulsions to sin so powerful that they are experienced as external impositions, even as these characters presume their own internal sinfulness. The agonizing inescapability of these characters' compulsions is emphasized through contrast with the ambiguous liberations of the plays' female protagonists. The plays highlight the contradiction in Calvinist descriptions of reprobation by generating dramatic effects that prompt audiences to suspect that what the tortured reprobates experience as divine interference is real rather than merely a projection of guilt. Despite their Calvinist elements, the plays reinforce the doubts raised by anti-Calvinists about English Calvinism's predestinarian theology.

Hurried to Destruction: Reprobation in *Arden of Faversham* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*

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This essay demonstrates that Arden of Faversham and A Woman Killed with Kindness explore important tensions in the Elizabethan understanding of the lived experience of the damned. Calvinist theologians tended to describe reprobation in terms that unintentionally suggested direct divine agency and responsibility, despite their insistence that culpability for sin lies in human nature. Aligning closely with Calvinist visions of reprobation, the plays characterize their villains as feeling compulsions to sin so powerful that they are experienced as external impositions, even as these characters presume their own internal sinfulness. The agonizing inescapability of these characters' compulsions is emphasized through contrast with the ambiguous liberations of the plays' female protagonists. The plays highlight the contradiction in Calvinist descriptions of reprobation by generating dramatic effects that prompt audiences to suspect that what the tortured reprobates experience as divine interference is real rather than merely a projection of guilt. Despite their Calvinist elements, the plays reinforce the doubts raised by anti-Calvinists about English Calvinism's predestinarian theology.

Cet article montre que les pièces Arden of Faversham et A Woman Killed with Kindness explorent les tensions présentes dans la vision élisabéthaine de l'expérience des damnés. Les théologiens calvinistes tendaient à décrire la condamnation de façon qu'ils suggéraient involontairement une action et une responsabilité divines directes, alors qu'ils insistaient aussi sur le fait que la culpabilité est inhérente à la nature humaine. Respectant étroitement les visions calvinistes de la condamnation, ces pièces représentent leurs vilains comme des personnages soumis à une compulsion pour le péché si forte qu'ils le vivent comme une force extérieure, même lorsqu'ils croient en leur propension interne pour le péché. Le caractère douloureusement inéluctable des compulsions de ces personnages est souligné par sa mise en contraste avec le parcours ambigu de libération des personnages féminins. Les pièces soulignent les contradictions internes aux descriptions calvinistes de la condamnation en produisant des effets dramatiques qui poussent l'assistance à soupçonner que, ce que les condamnés torturés perçoivent comme une intervention divine, est réel plutôt qu'une simple projection de leur propre culpabilité. En dépit de leurs éléments calvinistes, ces deux pièces renforcent donc le doute soulevé par les anti-calvinistes au sujet de la théologie de la prédestination chez les calvinistes anglais.

Early modern English domestic drama was once perceived to affirm a reassuring vision of providential order, divine graciousness, and justice. For Henry Hitch Adams, domestic tragedies followed a pattern established by morality drama and reinforced by “popular” Tudor religion. The sequence

perceptible in these plays was clear: “sin, discovery, repentance, punishment, and expectation of divine mercy.”¹ Madeleine Doran concurred, arguing that

The stern view of the preachers might be that man is essentially only worthy of damnation and can be saved only by the grace of God. But in the blurring of this view with the tears of innocence, forgiveness, and repentance the writers of domestic tragedy appeal to softer sentiment and lose the harsh edge of tragedy.²

By the late 1960s, such confidence in the comforting effect of domestic drama had given way to accounts of the plays as more disconcertingly tragic. Keith Sturgess found in domestic plays an “amoral universe” not unlike that of *King Lear*, and in which dramatic “poise” is created by the imposition of “a sense of Providence on that of Fate.”³ M. L. Wine, similarly, saw in the anonymous *Arden of Faversham* (ca. 1592) “a universe without pity.”⁴ Also writing of *Arden*, Alexander Leggatt described a world in which “the President of the Immortals seems to be having some very strange sport indeed.”⁵ Such criticism has aligned domestic tragedies with the court tragedies of the Shakespearean era, which Alan Sinfield argues show the Protestant God to be “like Stoic fate, indifferent to mankind” and all too often to become “a harsh, intrusive and predestinating supernatural force.”⁶

1. Henry Hitch Adams, *English Domestic Or, Homiletic Tragedy 1575–1642* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 7. Lena Cowen Orlin offers an updated discussion of the contours of the domestic tragic canon in “Domestic Tragedy: Private Life on the Public Stage,” in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2002), 367–83.

2. Madeleine Doran, *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 146.

3. Keith Sturgess, ed., “Introduction,” *Three Elizabethan Domestic Tragedies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 29, 30.

4. M. L. Wine, ed., “Introduction,” *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham* (London: Methuen/Revels, 1973), lxiv.

5. Alexander Leggatt, “Arden of Faversham,” *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (1983): 128.

6. Alan Sinfield, *Literature in Protestant England 1560–1660* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 113, 120; Peter Holbrook argues that the domestic plays emphasize their difference from the “larger totality” of the aristocratic tragic tradition, but that nonetheless the plays “move in and out of this high mode,” in *Literature and Degree in Renaissance England: Nashe, Bourgeois Tragedy, Shakespeare* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 87.

Domestic tragedies focus on crimes against familiars, and so characteristically feature the spectacular expression of guilt, or fear of sin's consequences.⁷ Such plots were well positioned to explore uncertainties about fault and sin. Modern criticism finds that complicity in sin is shared broadly among characters in domestic tragedy. As Leonore Lieblein has written, the plays "examine motives, and suggest the complicity of the victim in a way which changes the audience's perception of events."⁸ My argument about *Arden* and Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603), the domestic tragedies that have received the bulk of recent critical attention, is twofold. First, I will show that the plays can be understood to enhance their tragic pathos by offering villains who experience and express profound guilt for their sins as well as a feeling of inescapable compulsion to sin, emphasized partly by means of contrast with the apparent freedoms of the plays' female protagonists. In this way the plays reflect a serious Calvinist vision of the agonizing experience of reprobation.⁹ Second, I will argue that the plays' dramatizations of reprobate

7. See Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). Stephen Trainor argues that in domestic tragedies, guilt and repentance were imagined in either Anglican terms as resulting from fear of punishment, or in Calvinistic terms as resulting from "apprehension of the horrible nature of sin" (40). See "'Guilty Creatures at Play': Rhetoric and Repentance in Renaissance Domestic Tragedy," *Ball State University Forum* 24.2 (1983): 40–46.

8. Leonore Lieblein, "The Context of Murder in English Domestic Plays," *Studies in English Literature* 23 (1983): 181. Criticism over the past sixty years has enhanced our understanding of the breadth of culpability in these texts and their contexts. See, for example, Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Honor and Perception in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *MLQ* 20 (1959): 321–32; Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Routledge, 1985), 129–48; Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 15–78; Richard Helgerson, *Adulterous Alliances: Home, State, and History in Early Modern European Drama and Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 13–31; Paula McQuade, "A Labyrinth of Sin': Marriage and Moral Capacity in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Modern Philology* 98 (2000): 231–50.

9. For the significance of sinners' helplessness as an aspect of Calvinistic drama, see George C. Herndl, *The High Design: English Renaissance Tragedy and the Natural Law* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 162–63. A. C. Cawley divides the domestic tragedies into plays concerned with either salvation or damnation, and considers both *Arden* and *A Woman Killed* to be salvation plays; see Cawley, "A Yorkshire Tragedy Considered in Relation to Biblical and Moral Plays," *Everyman and Company: Essays on the Theme and Structure of the European Moral Play*, ed. Donald Gilman (New York: AMS Press, 1988). I do not believe that either play escapes Elizabethan anxiety about reprobation.

experience may also be seen to reflect a widely spread misunderstanding of the orthodox Calvinist position, a misunderstanding in which faith in human responsibility for sin is undermined by a perception of divine interference in sinners' lives. Peter Lake has found that the force of Providence in the domestic crime plays is so powerful that "human beings are shown to be mere playthings of the divine will."¹⁰ I will suggest that the precisely Calvinist representations of reprobate suffering in *Arden of Feversham* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, in which reprobates are unable to avoid imagining that their sins are imposed on them from above, are reframed and theologically destabilized by the plays' own dramatic insinuations of divine complicity in damnation.

In *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy*, Martha Tuck Rozett emphasizes one aspect of the broad cultural vision of reprobation. This is the reprobate as the proud and bold "other" imagined in many Puritan sermons in order to build assurance of election among congregants. Rozett quotes George Gifford, among others, who describes the damned as "beastly Epicures, folowing their own fleshly mind, letting lose the raines and giving the swing unto the raging lustes of the fleshe [...] devising al the colours and shifts they can to maintain sin, inventing al the slanders that may be."¹¹ Here the life of the reprobate is one of embodied desires, yet also one so frenetically active that it allows no time for self-reflection or for any feeling other than appetite. The basic concepts of such sermons, intended to contrast the viciousness of the damned with the saintliness of the elect, were copied in even more widely circulating literary forms. Nicholas Breton's 1616 character book *The Good and the Badde*, for example, exaggerates and consolidates the sermons' claims:

A Reprobate is the Childe of sinne, who being borne for the service of the Devill, cares not what villany he does in the world. [...] His desires are the destruction of the Vertuous, and his delights are the Traps to damnation. Hee bathes in the bloud of Murther, and sups up the broth of Iniquity.¹²

10. Peter Lake, with Michael Questier, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 39–40.

11. Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 54–55.

12. Nicholas Breton, *The Good and the Badde* (London, 1616), 37.

Breton imagines the reprobate life as one of exciting, active, and delightful villainy. It is a life of desire fulfilled through scheming and violence.¹³

Early modern predestinarian theology, however, does not imagine the reprobate's life as dominated by pleasure. Orthodox Calvinism was deeply interested in the torturously conflicted interiority of reprobates. For Calvinism, the living reprobate experienced a particularly dramatic set of related cognitive and affective conditions including self-knowledge of inner, native corruption, inability to sustain a spiritual life, and slavery to sin. The reprobate's inability to escape sin manifested in an inner compulsion so powerful it could feel like an external imposition. Calvinism thus recognized that reprobates sometimes suffered a strange and contradictory experience in which self-knowledge of innate corruption could be accompanied by a feeling that sin had been imposed by an external force. Calvin and other theologians sought to make clear that God could never be held accountable for sin.

Luther's debate with Erasmus over free will and predestination intensified the Reformers' interest in the Book of Exodus's complex depiction of Pharaoh, Scripture's "standard example of reprobation."¹⁴ The text offers evidence that Pharaoh's heart is hardened in sin by both God and Pharaoh himself. Calvin's resolution of the seemingly contradictory representation of Pharaoh's experience draws attention to the phenomenological and moral experience of Pharaoh as a reprobate. According to Calvin, "God had not merely 'hardened [Pharaoh's heart] by not softening it,' but he had 'turned Pharaoh over to Satan to be confirmed in the obstinacy of his breast.'"¹⁵ Calvin's interpretation, though phrased in terms of an objective conflict between the sinner and Satan, is primarily interiorizing and psychological. Exodus's seemingly contradictory assignments of agency and responsibility, as it were in both Pharaoh and God, serve to register two distinct objects of analysis: the objective situation in which Pharaoh finds himself and his internal, emotional experience. Pharaoh is entirely responsible for his own sin, and hardens his own heart. But Pharaoh

13. Such descriptions of superficial reprobate pleasures are analogous to the scenes of comic depravity in the mid-century homiletic plays analyzed by David Bevington in *From "Mankind" to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), esp. 152–66.

14. Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300–1700)*, vol. 4 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 222.

15. Pelikan, 223, quoting Calvin from the 1539 edition of the *Institutes*.

feels as though sin is imposed on him from without. His heart feels as if it were separate, ungraspable, and beyond his own control. As Loraine Boettner puts it, “One description is given from the divine view-point, the other is given from the human view-point.”¹⁶

Finally interested far more in the internal and felt experience of the damned than in outward activity and behaviour, Calvin comes to emphasize the reprobate’s miserable and horrifying self-knowledge. The traces of an imagined external conflict between the sinner and Satan fade as Calvin clarifies the nature of the reprobate’s conflict as primarily internal and psychological. As he reproves the wicked complaint that God is at fault for allowing corruption, Calvin insists

Let them not, therefore, charge God with injustice, if by his eternal judgment they are doomed to a death to which they themselves feel that whether they will or not they are drawn spontaneously by their own nature. Hence it appears how perverse is this affectation of murmuring, when of set purpose they suppress the cause of condemnation which they are compelled to recognize in themselves, that they may lay the blame upon God. But though I should confess a hundred times that God is the author (and it is most certain that he is), they do not, however, thereby efface their own guilt, which, engraved on their own consciences, is ever and anon presenting itself to their view.¹⁷

According to Calvin, the fact that God is the “author” or first cause of the decree of reprobation does not in any way diminish a sinner’s culpability. The “cause of condemnation” is unambiguously found in grotesquely fallen human nature. Calvin emphasizes a natural and inescapable human inclination to self-damning evil, an inclination constantly—“ever and anon”—and painfully experienced as corrupt. Calvin leaves no doubt that the reprobate actually feel their corruption, which they experience as an “engraving” on their consciences, as an object of vision, and as a “drawing” or compelled movement toward eternal death. The reprobate are compelled toward an experience of self-loss or self-alienation in

16. Loraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1963), 112.

17. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 3:23. This is the 1559 edition of the *Institutes*.

which their hearts not only reveal their damnation but do so through a collapse of interior coherence or identity. Calvin's contempt for those whose "perverse affectation[s]" generate "murmurs" against God's justice proceeds from his sense of the obviousness of natural, essential, and humanly inescapable sinfulness. Reprobates who blame God do so only as a way to "suppress" their dreadful awareness of their own culpability. The external projection of blame is merely a corollary of the intensity of the reprobate's guilt. Calvin does not think there is anything paradoxical or strange about the doctrine of reprobation, since his focus is on the self-awareness of deep corruption within the reprobate.¹⁸

William Whittingham's 1575 English translation of Theodore Beza's Calvinist theological tracts offers an even more memorable description of the compulsion to grotesque corruption suffered by the damned. For Beza, some reprobates are indeed wholly indifferent to the call of God, and presumably experience little internal turmoil in their lives. But Beza also describes something much worse:

To conclude, they whiche are moste miserable of all, those climbe a degree higher, that their fal mighte be more grievous, for they are rayseed so highe by some gift of grace, that they are a little moved with some taste of the heavenly gifte: so that for the time they seeme to have received the seede, and to be planted in the Church of God, and also shewe the way of salvation to others. But this is playne, that the spirit of adoption, which we have sayde to be onely proper unto them whiche are never cast forth but are written in the secret of Gods people, is never communicate unto them. For if they were of the Elect, they shulde remaine still with the Elect. All these therefore (because of necessitie, and yet willingly, as they whiche are under the slaverie of sinne, returne to their vomite and fall away from faith[...].¹⁹

18. Calvin's insistence on the reprobate's knowledge of corruption is consistent with his vision of the elect's faith as knowledge. See R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 19. On the unambiguous logical rigour of Calvin's thought, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958; orig. pub. 1904–05), 102–04.

19. Theodore de Beza, *A Briefe Declaration of the Chiefe Poyntes of Christian Religion Set Foorth in a Table* [trans. William Whittingham] (London, 1575), B6r.

Beza's interest here is in the reprobate's failure to persevere, in which spiritual desire becomes corrupt. Some reprobates may initially "taste" grace and perceive themselves to be among the Elect, but eventually they return to the grotesque taste for "vomite," and thus to the clearest awareness that they are not what they had thought they were. The lack of self-control and the internally-driven compulsion are experienced as a "slaverie" which is both "of necessitie" and "yet willingly" suffered. Beza's supralapsarian predestinarianism, in which God is understood not to choose the elect from a corrupt "lump" but to separate the elect and the reprobate prior to creation, might seem even more likely than Calvin's vision to make God appear the cause of sin.²⁰ Nonetheless, for Beza as for Calvin, God is "author" and first cause of reprobation, but fallen nature makes the reprobate responsible for his condition. The "necessitie" that immediately causes and compels is the slavery to the world produced by human appetite and desire. Beza does not understand this as a contradictory or paradoxical phenomenon. For Beza and Calvin, God's decree of reprobation is consistent and just in light of cupiditous human nature, and the immediate cause of an individual's reprobation is in the individual's nature, not in God.²¹

Nonetheless, Bezan Calvinist descriptions of reprobation allow the metaphorical hardening of reprobates' hearts by God to be elaborated into a narrative of such detail and complexity that it becomes nearly impossible to remember that the point is that God passes over the reprobates whose sin originates in their own nature. In order to imagine the reprobate's psychological experience of repeated falling from self-control, the Reformers often used the same rhetorical technique as used in Exodus to describe Pharaoh's human experience. They metaphorically transformed divine disregard into an active work of wrath. The particularly tragic version of reprobation offered by William Perkins in *A Golden Chaine* provides a memorable example of the figurative activation of God's passive abandonment of reprobates to their depraved natures. In the chapter "Concerning the Execution of the decree of reprobation,"

20. On supralapsarianism, see Kendall, 30–31, and Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 15–16. For Pelikan, Calvin's predestinarianism is very nearly supralapsarian (Pelikan, 224).

21. According to Kendall, "Beza can claim that the reprobate were predestined because of 'corruption, lack of faith, & iniquitie', [and] he contends that God executed a 'condemnation' towards the reprobate, though predestined prior to the Fall" (Kendall, 31).

Perkins describes reprobates “which are called” by “an uneffectuall calling” and who experience “an enlightning of their mindes,” followed by “a certaine penitencie” and then “a temporarie faith.” Faith leads to

a tasting of heavenly gifts: as of Justification, and of Sanctification, and of the vertues of the world to come. This tasting is verely a sense in the hearts of the Reprobates, whereby they doe perceive and feele the excellencie of Gods benefits, notwithstanding they doe not enjoy the same. For it is one thing to taste of dainties at a banquet, and another thing to feede and to be nourished thereby.²²

The seemingly contradictory idea of “an uneffectual calling” by itself places enormous pressure on the idea that God is the “author” but not the immediate cause of reprobation, and consequently on the doctrinal foundation of human responsibility for sin. As was the case in Beza, some reprobates receive a “taste” of grace, which has the effect of enabling the internal experience of proximity to a nourishing God, an experience which is nonetheless only a mirage. What Peter White describes as the “recourse to the difference between the decree of reprobation and the execution of that decree” which enabled Bezan Calvinists “to claim that the causes of reprobation were ‘both necessary and voluntary’” comes under great strain.²³ That difference, by which God makes the decree while humans bear responsibility for the execution, all too easily breaks down as God appears to become directly involved in the execution.

The seeming contradiction regarding the agent responsible for sin and reprobation in Calvinist theology left some Protestants deeply troubled about the implications of Calvinist predestination for a Christian understanding of both God and sin. Nicholas Tyacke has argued that the very success of English preachers like Perkins in establishing Bezan Calvinism as popular orthodoxy “helped fuel anti-Calvinist sentiment.”²⁴ Jacobus Arminius, for example, found

22. William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine: Or, The Description of Theologie* (Cambridge, 1600), 164–65.

23. Peter White, 19.

24. Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 29. That the theology and divinity of the Elizabethan and Jacobean church were predominantly Calvinist is now historiographical orthodoxy. For Tyacke, “Calvinism was the *de facto* religion of the Church of England under Queen Elizabeth and King James” and “The characteristic theology of English Protestant sainthood was Calvinism, centring on a belief in divine predestination,

Beza's distinction between the execution and the decree of reprobation "most futile" as a defense of a good God.²⁵ Even before the revolutionary advancement of Arminianism in England in the late 1620s, some Protestants found themselves deeply disturbed by the implications of the rhetorical activation of God's execution of reprobation. Samuel Harsnett's 1585 sermon at Paul's Cross provides an example. For Harsnett, the (roughly supralapsarian) "opinion" "That God should designe many thousands of soules to Hell before they were [...] to get him glory in their damnation [...] is growne huge and monstrous (like a Goliah) and men do shake and tremble at it."²⁶ What Harsnett's complaint reveals is a perception that the doctrine of double predestination demands the imagination of an arbitrarily cruel God and inappropriately ambiguates the location of moral responsibility for sin.²⁷ In Harsnett's perspective such confusion was very widespread.

In the twenty years after Harsnett's Paul's Cross sermon, a small but vocal group of theologians and preachers came to agree with him. In 1595 and 1596, Cambridge professors William Barrett and Peter Baro shocked their orthodox colleagues by preaching against double and unconditional predestination. From the ensuing controversy came the Lambeth Articles, which reasserted Calvinist doctrine as "a statement of correct teaching" at Cambridge.²⁸ Nonetheless, the Barrett and Baro affair demonstrated that doubts about double predestination had become sufficient to be publicly and energetically articulated. The core claims of Barrett and Baro were that certainty of election was impossible, that perseverance of the saints was contingent, rather than absolute, and that "sin was the true, proper and first cause of reprobation."²⁹ Among the English

both double and absolute" (7, 1). See also Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1980), 5.

25. Peter White, 25–27.

26. Samuel Harsnett, "A Sermon Preached at Paul's Cross," appended to Richard Steward, *Three Sermons* (London, 1658), 133–34.

27. Regarding Harsnett, see Peter White, 99. Dewey D. Wallace, Jr. notes that Harsnett "failed to appreciate the argument of Reformed theology that reprobation could be both of God's absolute power and for the sins of the reprobate," in *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525–1695* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 66. Harsnett's real point, however, is that the Calvinist vision is too difficult and paradoxical to be widely understood.

28. Wallace, 67. On the Articles, see also Peter White, 101–10.

29. Peter White, 102.

religious leaders in agreement were John Overall, John Downe, and Bishops Richard Bancroft and Lancelot Andrewes.³⁰ Most influentially, Richard Hooker found himself forced to acknowledge the tendency of Calvinism to prompt the imagination of an arbitrarily cruel divinity. For Hooker, God is both perceptibly reasonable and good, and so sin can be “no plant of God’s setting.”³¹ From the ancient fathers, Hooker, like Arminius, argued that reprobates are those whose sin is foreseen by God. During the Cambridge controversies, William Whitaker, the Cambridge head chiefly opposed to Barrett and Baro and drafter of the Lambeth Articles, approached Lord Burleigh to support the Calvinist position and the Articles. Burleigh’s response was not encouraging. Whitaker’s Cambridge colleague Humphrey Tyndall reported that Burleigh

seemed to dislike of the propositions concerning predestination, and did reason somewhat against Dr. Whitaker in them, drawing by a similitude a reason from an earthly prince, inferring thereby they charged God of cruelty and might cause men to be desperate in their wickedness. [...] So saying that these matters were too deep for him, his Lordship bid us farewell.³²

As Sinfield argues, Calvinism “located power firmly with God, but it has trouble establishing his goodness.”³³

Arden of Faversham’s central protagonist, Alice Arden, is easily understood in terms of fully liberated passion and appetite. She appears to be a figure of freedom whose cultural origins lie in the demonically appetitive and manipulative reprobate of popular sermons and Puritan tracts. She does not suffer the sustained and agonizing guilt envisioned in theologically serious explorations of reprobation. Her first soliloquy makes of her a Marlovian rebel utterly indifferent to expected duties as she imagines the death of her husband as the necessary condition for her emotional fulfillment:

30. See Wallace, 75–76. For Bancroft, see Tyacke, 16–17.

31. Quoted in Peter White, 134. For Hooker, see Peter White, 124–39, and Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, 145–238.

32. Quoted in H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 373.

33. Sinfield, 119.

Sweet news is this. Oh, that some airy spirit
 Would, in the shape and likeness of a horse,
 Gallop with Arden 'cross the ocean
 And throw him from his back into the waves!
 Sweet Mosby is the man that hath my heart,
 And he usurps it, having nought but this—
 That I am tied to him by marriage.
 Love is a god, and marriage is but words,
 And therefore Mosby's title is the best.³⁴

Alice's desire to kill Arden and marry Mosby changes little throughout the play. She later wonders, rhetorically, "Why should [Arden] thrust his sickle in our corn, / Or what hath he to do with thee, my love, / Or govern me that am to rule myself?" (10.82–84). Arden himself describes his wife as a reprobate. She is, he says, "rooted in her wickedness, / Perverse and stubborn, not to be reclaimed" (4.9–10). Various critics have agreed.³⁵ But for Alice, sin seems to be experienced not as sin but as "sweetness," and damnation as no element whatsoever of a world in which real love is self-sustaining "corn."³⁶ Alice may indeed have affinities with the thoughtless and internally "unregulated" reprobate of some Puritan sermons, without real fear or guilt, but she certainly

34. *Arden of Faversham*, ed. Martin White, rev. ed. (London: Bloomsbury/New Mermaids, 2007), 1.94–102. All further citations of *Arden* will be from this edition.

35. Raymond Chapman finds Alice to be "a female Faust" who "damns herself willingly," in "*Arden of Faversham: Its Interest Today*," *English: The Journal of the English Association* 11 (1956): 15–17. Kathleen McCluskie describes Alice as "the ultimate monstrous, unruly woman," in her Introduction to *Plays on Women*, ed. Kathleen McCluskie and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press / Revels, 1999), 36. For Peter Lake, Alice becomes the "archetypal whore" who is "driven by love / lust to seek a totally autonomous state" and upon whom Providence will work its will (Lake, *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, 68–69).

36. A few critics have noted an element of hesitancy or internal friction in Alice's drive to liberation, among them Keith Sturgess and M. L. Wine. Alexander Leggatt follows Sturgess in citing Alice's fear of "overthrow" (1.216) as he argues that she is among the characters who seem "doomed by their own compulsions." Alice "seems to feel the touch of disaster." Convincingly, however, Leggatt hesitates to insist that there can be any "clarity" in our grasp of Alice's internal state; her expressions of irresolution and fear, so often spoken in the midst of contentious dialogues with Mosby, may be "pouting, flirting, teasing, or all three; it could be that Alice is not fully aware of the seriousness of her words." See Leggatt, 127.

exceeds this stereotype.³⁷ As many critics have noted, she comes to be characterized by a freedom of desire and creative self-presentation. Her ever-shifting performances emphasize her “longing for deliverance from bondage” and reveal her conviction that the external constraints she loathes are arbitrary and unnatural.³⁸

Mosby, however, experiences sin as sin, and as both painful and inescapable. As Alice’s and Mosby’s plotting against Arden intensifies, Mosby becomes unable to ignore his guilt.

Disturbed thoughts drives me from company
And dries my marrow with their watchfulness.
Continual trouble of my moody brain
Feebles my body by excess of drink
And nips me as the bitter north-east wind
Doth check the tender blossoms in the spring.
Well fares the man, how’er his cates do taste,
That tables not with foul suspicion;
And he but pines amongst his delicates
Whose troubled mind is stuffed with discontent.
My golden time was when I had no gold.

37. Mary Janell Metzger emphasizes Alice’s “unregulated desire” in “In Search of ‘the True Understanding of the Circumstances’: Making Sense of *Arden of Faversham*,” *Genre* 26 (1993): 155–75.

38. Viviana Comensoli, “*Household Business*”: *Domestic Plays of Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 88. Other critics who emphasize Alice’s internally unhindered capacity for resistance and desire for freedom include Catherine Belsey, who finds that Alice’s drive to “free sexuality” constitutes something like “the unconscious of the text” (Belsey, 134–35); Frances E. Dolan, whose Alice performs the role of the abused wife in order to position herself to commit a crime which the play presents as “the ultimate violent refusal of subsumption” (Dolan, 56); and Julie Schutzmann, who argues that Alice experiences the freedom to “manipulate [...] social structures” within externally circumscribed limits, in “Alice Arden’s Freedom and the Suspended Moment of *Arden of Faversham*,” *SEL* 36 (1996): 289–314. Michael Neill’s Alice exercises sexual power “shamelessly”; see Neill, “‘This Gentle Gentleman’: Social Change and the Language of Status in *Arden of Faversham*,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 10 (1998): 93. Elizabeth Williamson argues that Alice’s “unscrupulous” personality and theatrical orientation allow her to exploit her prayer book as a mere prop, in “The Uses and Abuses of Prayer Book Properties in *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, and *Arden of Faversham*,” *ELR* 39 (2009): 371–95. Carol Mejia Laperle’s Alice feels the opportune moment to revise meaning through rhetoric; see Laperle, “Rhetorical Situationality: Alice Arden’s Kairotic Effect in *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*,” *Women’s Studies* 39 (2010): 175–93.

Though then I wanted, yet I slept secure;
 My daily toil begat me night's repose
 My night's repose made daylight fresh to me.
 But since I climbed the top bough of the tree
 And sought to build my nest among the clouds
 Each gentlest airy gale doth shake my bed
 And makes me dread my downfall to the earth.
 But whither doth contemplation carry me?
 The way I seek to find, where pleasure dwells,
 Is hedged behind me that I cannot back
 But needs must on although to danger's gate. (8.1–23)

Mosby's fearful "watchfulness" will compel him over the course of the succeeding lines to plan the murders of Arden, Greene, and Alice herself. It is appropriate, then, that his language should echo *The Jew of Malta's* Barabas in his counting house. While Mosby "pines amongst his delicates" and, among those same immorally-acquired goods, has a mind "troubled" and "stuffed with discontent," Barabas was troubled only to count his "Infinite riches in a little room." Marlowe's villain ends by falling into a boiling pot surrounded by flame, as if his final earthly moments anticipate the torments of hell coming shortly to his damned soul. Mosby's "dread [...] downfall" to earth from the treetop suggests an even longer and more horrifying fall.

Mosby's language gestures more than once to a feeling of intense guilt combined with self-alienation and compulsion eerily similar to that used by serious preachers and theologians to describe the experience of the damned on earth. Mosby experiences his disturbing compulsion as a powerful internal force, in which the "thoughts" and "trouble" in his brain "feeble" his body. Yet his simile suggests that he also experiences the origin of this "trouble" as external and invisible to himself and as far beyond his control as "the bitter north-east wind" is for a young plant. He is "driven" from both within and without. As he projects his own self-suspicion into the figure of a guest with whom he uncomfortably "tables," he reinforces the imagery of self-alienation which represents his current emotional experience, yet he simultaneously acknowledges his intense feeling of culpability by calling that suspicion "foul." He "slept secure" only before he gained his new wealth, yet "he needs must on" to complete his appropriation of Arden's gold and, by way of the bawdy

synecdoche by which “gate” suggests Alice herself, his wife. He suffers the fate of Calvin’s earthly-damned, who cannot “efface their own guilt [...] engraved on their own consciences.” His procession in sin would suggest to a Calvinistically-inclined audience that Mosby deserves the same response as Calvin imagined offering those who would condemn God for their reprobation. His sins must be understood to grow naturally from themselves.

Yet *Arden of Faversham* allows for an alternative perspective on Mosby. It constructs a parallel relationship between Mosby and Arden’s young and untrustworthy servant Michael partly in order to prompt doubt in the faith that Mosby’s sinfulness is entirely innate. Mosby’s soliloquy in which he berates himself for his depravity is structurally and thematically juxtaposed to the previous scene in which Michael’s commitment to betray his master is reinforced by threats from the hired murderers Black Will and Shakebag. In this scene, Michael is clearly influenced by external agents whom he had earlier imagined in terms that appear to echo the terrified final words of Doctor Faustus as the devils arrive to destroy him:

The wrinkles in his foul, death-threat’ning face
Gapes open wide, like graves to swallow men.
My death to him is but a merriment,
And he will murder me to make him sport.
He comes, he comes! Ah, Master Franklin, help! (4.81–85)

Black Will and Shakebag are, seemingly, comically-demonic vice figures, forcefully perpetuating Michael’s will to mischief. But this dramatic figuring of external compulsion is no metaphor for a graceless life of worldliness. Michael is not merely enslaved to his own internal corruption. The juxtaposition of the scene revealing Michael’s sense of powerlessness against Black Will and Shakebag with Mosby’s soliloquy of reprobation helps intensify the impression that the “bitter” and soul-deadening “north-east wind” which Mosby imagines within himself may indeed be driving him on from somewhere without. If with respect to Michael, the play glances downward to hell as it hints at complicity in sin—perhaps suggesting that God has turned Michael, like Calvin’s Pharaoh, “over to Satan to be confirmed in [his] obstinacy”—then by means of Mosby’s image of the northeast wind the play glances upward, however briefly, toward

another agent perhaps complicit in the sins of the reprobate. The play shares Mosby's uncertainty about the origins of his dreadfully sinful drives.

In *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, Heywood develops the psychologically complex and theologically destabilizing experience of the reprobate with particular force.³⁹ Wendoll's guilt for his crime is comparable in emotional prominence to Mosby's, but his contradictory sense of external compulsion combined with innate culpability is more elaborate. When Wendoll first recognizes his desire for Anne, his reaction is one of horror:

I am a villain if I apprehend
 But such a thought; then, to attempt the deed—
 Slave, thou art damned without redemption
 I'll drive away the passion with a song.
 A song! Ha, ha! A song, as if, fond man,
 Thy eyes could swim in laughter when thy soul
 Lies drenched and drowned in red tears of blood.
 I'll pray, and see if God within my heart
 Plant better thoughts. Why, prayers are meditations,
 And when I meditate—O God forgive me—
 It is on her divine perfections.
 I will forget her; I will arm myself
 Not to entertain a thought of love to her;

.....

[Enter over the stage Frankford, Anne and Nick]

39. The long history of Heywood criticism demonstrates the difficulty of asserting Heywood's own theology with any certainty. Many years ago, A. M. Clark declared Heywood a Puritan "in all but name," in *Thomas Heywood: Playwright and Miscellanist* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 192. Following Clark, Margot Heinemann, in *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), and Martin Butler in *Theatre and Crisis 1632–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) recruit Heywood to the periphery of the parliamentary Puritan opposition. Dennis R. Klinck, "Calvinism and Jacobean Tragedy," *Genre* 11 (1978): 333–58, and Herndl, *High Design*, make the most fully developed cases for the Calvinism of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. In "Calvinist and Puritan Attitudes towards the Stage in Renaissance England," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 14 (1988): 41–55, Paul Whitfield White calls Heywood a "staunch defender of predestinarian theology" (46). By contrast, Alan Holaday, in "Thomas Heywood and the Puritans," *JEGP* 49 (1950): 192–203, and Barbara J. Baines in *Thomas Heywood* (Boston: Twayne, 1984) have insisted that Heywood was in no way a Puritan.

O God! O God! With what violence
 I am hurried to my own destruction.
 There goest thou, the most perfect'st man
 That ever England bred a gentleman;
 And shall I wrong his bed?⁴⁰

The play's answer to Wendoll's rhetorical question is, of course, affirmative. Moments later, Wendoll continues his recriminating self-scrutiny:

And shall I wrong this man? Base man! Ingrate!
 Hast thou the power straight with thy gory hands
 To rip thy image from his bleeding heart?
 To scratch thy name from out the holy book
 Of his remembrance, and to wound his name
 That holds thy name so dear, or rend his heart
 To whom thy heart was joined and knit together?
 And yet I must. Then, Wendoll, be content.
 Thus villains, when they would, cannot repent. (6.44–52)

“And yet I must.” Wendoll feels mysteriously compelled to betray his friend and host, but he recognizes the internal source of that compulsion. He is “damned without redemption” and he “cannot repent” because his soul is “drowned in [...] blood” and cannot ascend to spiritual heights. He envisions himself in terms very like those used by both Calvin and Beza.⁴¹ He cannot escape the evidence of his damnation: he is “hurried” to his “own destruction” and his meditations reveal to him visually the desires to which he is a “Slave.” He feels among those “doomed to a death to which they themselves feel that whether they will or not

40. *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, ed. Brian Scobie (London: New Mermaids/A&C Black, 1985), 6.1–21. All further citations of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* will be from this edition.

41. Michael McClintock argues that Wendoll's inability to be moved by Anne's suffering confirms his reprobation, and that “predestination [...] compels Wendoll to sin.” McClintock, “Grief, Theater and Society in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*,” in *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, ed. Margo Swiss and David A. Kent (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002), 109. Klinck argues that Wendoll thinks of his actions “specifically in theological terms” (Klinck, 352).

they are drawn spontaneously by their own nature.”⁴² The intensity of Wendoll’s pain is registered further by the implication that he recognizes his alienation from unity with Frankford as identical to alienation from God. His image of scratching Frankford’s book is also an image of scratching himself out of the “book” of God’s gracious remembrance. He imagines ripping himself not only from Frankford’s heart but from the sacrificially bleeding heart of Christ, thus disabling himself of the grace made accessible to the elect through Christ’s sacrifice. Wendoll imagines himself among those whom Beza described as “moste miserable of all” who “climbe a degree higher, that their fal mighte be more grievous, for they are rayed so highe by some gift of grace, that they are a little moved with some taste of the heavenly gifte.”⁴³ He had felt close to God as he had felt close to Frankford, but he was—he now suspects—never truly close, never among the elect. The enjambment of “see if God within my heart / Plant better thoughts” reveals Wendoll’s pathos in the form of a continuing desire for divine proximity within an expression of divine distance. God seems in, and then (after the line break) not in, his heart. His special horror is to “fall not quite bereft of grace,” as Anne describes her own condition in this same scene (6.155). He is among those who cannot help but “returne to their vomite and fall away from faith.”⁴⁴

Even as Wendoll acknowledges his innate corruption he also imagines his sins as coming to him from without. His self-mockery for thinking that he might “drive away” his “passion” with a song suggests that he has experienced that frightening desire constantly and intently for the hours or days that have passed since the end of scene 4. The idea that he might “drive away” his corrupt appetite also suggests the alienability and alienness of those sinful thoughts. The metaphor by which he ironically imagines refusing to “entertain” his sinful passion implicitly locates that passion outside himself, as a guest whose presence he could and should refuse. But the very fact that Frankford has not refused to “entertain” Wendoll himself suggests the fragility of Wendoll’s spiritually defensive fantasy. There is little hope that he will be able to resist the

42. See note 17, above.

43. See note 19, above.

44. Alison Hobgood also emphasizes Wendoll’s deeply painful anxiety regarding his feeling of uncontrollable compulsion, in *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 104. See also Nancy Gutierrez, “The Irresolutions of Melodrama: The Meaning of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*,” *Exemplaria* 1.2 (1989): 276.

entertainment this evil guest will bring him. Like his own desires, Wendoll is a betrayer of biblical scope. In scene 16, after having been imagined as a Judas by Frankford several times, and after despairing at the vision of Anne in exile from her home, he describes himself in soliloquy as the first reprobate, a Cain wandering in the wilderness:

She's gone to death; I live to want and woe,
Her life, her sins, and all upon my head
And I must now go wander like a Cain
In foreign countries and remoted climes. (16.125–28)

He then seems to console himself with a hope of eventually returning to worldly elevation: “And I divine, however now dejected, / My worth and parts being by some great man praised, / At my return I may in court be raised” (16.135–37). There is little genuine optimism in this final failure of contrition, however. Wendoll’s pun on “divine,” as both verb and adjective, reveals that he is on the brink of mocking his own hope. The emotional burden of the speech is clear; Wendoll feels trapped in sin on earth, and he envies Anne her release in death. When in scene 6 Wendoll asks himself if he has the emotional fortitude to betray his host and friend, he also asks himself if he has the spiritual capacity to become responsible for the alienation of his soul from God. His answer, couched largely in a second-person self-address that reflects the self-alienation of the Calvinist reprobate, is that he does. The blending or intertwining of Wendoll’s acknowledgements of innate corruption with his imagery of objectively distinct desire helps reinforce the orthodox Calvinist perception that while Wendoll feels a difference between inner self and damningly compelling alien sin, the feeling is an illusory response to the intensity and inescapability of corrupt internal desire.

As does *Arden of Faversham*, Heywood’s play uses contrast to emphasize and dramatically intensify the experience of a suffering reprobate, trapped by compulsion. In *A Woman Killed*, the foil to the reprobate is not a character whose primary experience is that of sustained carnal freedom; instead, as Wendoll himself suggests, it is a character who seems to find spiritual release. Much recent interpretation has sought to explain the significance of Anne Frankford’s strange and troubling confusion as she submits to Wendoll’s sinful will, but her state of mind in the final scene of the play is equally important to

the play's meaning. In this scene, Anne feels precisely the kind of release from spiritual anxiety for which Wendoll cannot hope. Self-starved and ashen, on the brink of death, she tells Frankford,

Out of my zeal to heaven, whither I am now bound,
I was so impudent to wish you here,
.....
Pardon, O pardon me! My fault so heinous is
That if you in this world forgive it not,
Heaven will not clear it in the world to come. (17.82–87)

Moved, we may presume, by his wife's physical fragility and a conviction of her sincerity, Frankford pardons her fully: "As freely from the low depth of my soul / As my Redeemer hath forgiven his death, / I pardon thee" (17.93–95).⁴⁵ Anne's final words to Frankford are immediately preceded by an apostrophe to her soul: "Pardoned on earth, soul, thou in heaven art free, / Once more thy wife dies thus embracing thee" (17.121–22). These words have been understood to suggest the last-minute renewal of Anne's and Frankford's marriage but they also suggest that she feels that the punishment she received from Frankford was a necessary condition for her spiritual rebirth. Moments earlier, Frankford had asked her how she feels, and her answer had been "Not of this world." Even before death, Anne has escaped the world in which Wendoll is trapped. He could only half-heartedly, even self-mockingly, hope to "in court be raised," whereas Anne feels almost nothing but the imminent ascent of her soul.⁴⁶

45. Christopher Frey and Leonore Lieblein argue that Anne's "starvation brings about Frankford's submission to her when he renews his wedding vow in terms of Anne's starved corporeality" and that "Self-starving allows Anne to regain personal agency." Frey and Lieblein, "My breasts sear'd: The Self-Starved Female Body and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Early Theatre* 7 (2004): 61.

46. Other critics who understand Anne to experience a transformation and a release in the final scene include Leonore Lieblein, for whom Anne becomes "a moral being" with "autonomy and dignity" (Lieblein, 193); Nancy A. Gutierrez, for whom Anne's starvation is an exorcism and an "equivocal means of individual self-assertion," in "Exorcism by Fasting in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*: A Paradigm of Puritan Resistance?," *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 33 (1994): 55; Michael McClintock, who argues that Anne's sincere grief is powerful enough to reform her husband (McClintock, 116); and Sharon Creaser, for whom Anne's behaviour in the final scene represents "a complete reversal from the beginning of the play," in "Public and Private Performance of Guilt in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *The Dalhousie Review* 85 (2003): 293.

Anne's final moments of worldly emotion undoubtedly contrast with Wendoll's feeling of spiritual bondage. Nonetheless, the play may not allow us to be so certain that Frankford has genuinely liberated his wife. John Canuteson, for example, has pointed out that by Protestant standards, Anne is "theologically naïve, not knowing that one need not be forgiven on earth to receive God's forgiveness."⁴⁷ Jennifer Panek has argued that "Anne is so penitent, she barely hopes for forgiveness."⁴⁸ And while Anne's self-starvation may be seen as a humiliation of her sinful flesh and thus a spiritual purification, such an act would be disconcerting for Protestant audience members.⁴⁹ Anne does indeed say, strangely, that if Frankford does not pardon her sin, "Heaven will not clear it." She seems so consumed by her husband's authority that we might suspect she tricks herself into believing that it is heaven that is now the object of her "zeal." Panek further demonstrates the extreme and devastating passivity imposed by Frankford on Anne by arguing that Anne's self-starvation, even though intended by Anne to demonstrate to her husband her full subordination and selflessness, would likely be perceived by many audience members as damning suicide.⁵⁰ Anne may have failed to enter a new and more genuinely spiritual world at all. The scene may be taken to reveal a contradiction in the post-Reformation household, in which the enhancement of the authority of the husband and father does not strengthen spiritual life but rather creates conditions for idolatry.⁵¹ Ironically, Anne's idolization of the authority of her husband may persuade an audience that her suffering is by no means over.

47. John Canuteson, "The Theme of Forgiveness in the Plot and Subplot of 'A Woman Killed with Kindness,'" *Renaissance Drama* 2 (1969): 140.

48. Jennifer Panek, "Punishing Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *SEL* 34 (1994): 368.

49. Comensoli argues that early modern audiences would understand Anne's self-starvation as "a form of purification of the soul" (Comensoli, 81–82).

50. Panek, 372. In agreement that Anne's death should be understood as suicide are Reina Green, "Open Ears, Appetite, and Adultery in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *ESC* 31 (2005): 53–74, and Hobgood, 120.

51. Such an interpretation is consistent with much contemporary analysis of *A Woman Killed*, which finds that the play either intends to reveal, or can be read against the grain to reveal, that Anne suffers in the interests of patriarchy. Canuteson, for example, finds that Frankford is "a beast" who "most hypocritically thinks that his decree and God's are one" and whose obsession with honour rather than forgiveness "removes him from consideration as a Christian gentleman" (Canuteson, 136–37); See also McQuade, "A Labyrinth of Sin"; Lyn Bennett, "The Homosocial Economies of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 24 (2000): 135–61; Lena Cowen Orlin, "Domestic Tragedy";

Ultimately, the scene is profoundly ambiguous. It may be understood to confirm the spiritual freedom that Frankford's power to discipline brings to his wife, or it may be seen to imply that Frankford's hubris prevents his wife from achieving spiritual liberation.

Frankford's potential complicity in his wife's spiritual demise is analogous to the possibility of divine complicity in Wendoll's compulsion to sin. Heywood carefully contextualizes Wendoll's deep guilt, seemingly fully resonant with Calvinism, within a set of events that actively trigger audience perception that Wendoll is, or at least may be, externally driven to sin. At lines 12 and 13 of his self-recriminating soliloquy in scene 6, he promises himself that he will make every effort to end his attraction to Anne: "I will forget her; I will arm myself / Not to entertain a thought of love to her." Seconds later, the stage direction following line 16 reveals a visible challenge to Wendoll's will to good: "Enter over the stage Frankford, Anne, and Nick." Wendoll's pained frustration is immediately evident: "O God! O God! With what a violence / I am hurried to my own destruction." Wendoll's passive phrasing—"I am hurried"—suggests that he likely feels himself to be as much hardened from outside as internally self-hardening. At the very moment that Wendoll imagines the objective alienness of his "thought" as a guest that might be entertained, that thought appears to him in material form. From this point on, Wendoll's self-recriminations are consistently in tension with his own frustrated expression of powerlessness before a seemingly external agency. He asks himself, for example, "If I say / I will not do it, what thing can enforce me? / Who can compel me? What sad destiny / Hath such command upon my yielding thoughts? / I will not! Ha! Some fury pricks me on" (6.95–99). It becomes increasingly difficult for Wendoll, as well as for Heywood's audience, to sustain faith in the idea that Wendoll's externalizing projections of culpability represent nothing more than the intensity of his guilt in a life innately graceless.⁵² Later in scene 11, for example, in an aside in which hard-hearted pleasure has almost beaten back lingering conscientiousness, Wendoll observes with a painfully unrecognized irony: "How business, time and hours all gracious proves, / And are the furtherers to my new born love" (11.87–88). His increasing familiarity with his feelings

and Erin Miller and James H. Force, "The Failure to be a 'Goode Husbande' in Thomas Heywood's *Edward IV (Parts I and II)* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Ben Jonson Journal* 18 (2011): 254–73.

52. Hobgood argues that the "thing" that compels Wendoll is emotion itself. Hobgood, 104–05.

here enables him to transform the “fury” he had earlier felt to be influencing him into the seemingly “gracious” set of circumstances he calls “business, time and hours.” While Heywood here gives Wendoll another seemingly orthodox expression in which circumstances only enhance or “further” a sinful love whose origins remain internal, the terrible irony that those circumstances may be “gracious” reinforces the troubling possibility that a furious divinity may be directly involved in “executing” Wendoll’s damnation.

Among the dramatic strengths of *Arden of Faversham* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness* are gripping representations of painful compulsions to sin seemingly consistent with Calvinist orthodoxy. Both plays enhance the visibility of the agony associated with reprobation by contrasting that pain with the feeling of freedom experienced by the female protagonists. But Elizabethan Calvinism’s theology of absolute divine sovereignty made it difficult not to identify the mirage of external agency sensed by reprobates with the power of God. *Arden of Faversham* and *A Woman Killed with Kindness* offer the possibility that what their reprobates feel is very real. Like Calvinism itself, they figure internal compulsion to sin as external interference. But these plays are not sure that sin is not in fact, in Hooker’s words, a “plant of God’s setting.” They can be understood to confirm the anti-Calvinist fear that Calvinism makes distinguishing between the divine decree of reprobation and human culpability far too difficult. In turn, they help us understand how anti-Calvinism was able to secure its place in late-Tudor and Stuart English society.