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CALLING ALL CAST MEMBERS: ELEVATING MATERIAL OBJECTS AND
AMBIENT ENVIRONMENTS TO NON-HUMAN RHETORICAL ACTORS IN
ARDEN OF FAVERSHAM

BY

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TARA M. PULASKI

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Eastern Kentucky University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my spouse, Eric C. Pulaski, for his loving encouragement and unwavering support throughout my academic career and beyond.

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ABSTRACT

Material rhetoric and ambient rhetoric frameworks offer a unique lens to view the materiality in early modern drama. Using these principles, as well as Actor-Network Theory and Affect Theory, objects and environments can be elevated to non-human actors in a play's rhetorical situation. *Arden of Faversham* engages heavily with the material world at every level of the play, making it a prime candidate for such an analysis. The material objects, ambient environments, and geographical places in *Arden of Faversham* remain so crucial that they become non-human rhetorical actors, complimenting and complicating the human actors. The play cannot be severed from the material. A methodology called Non-Human Actor Elevation is used to detail the importance of non-human actors in *Arden of Faversham*.

Keywords: Material Rhetoric, Ambient Rhetoric, Place-Based Rhetoric, Actor-Network Theory, Affect Theory, *Arden of Faversham*, Non-Human Actor Elevation, Early Modern Drama, Materialism

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[I. Introduction]

Arden of Faversham, an anonymous domestic tragedy published in 1592, rigorously engages with the material world, in terms of both physical objects and props as well as specific places and environments. In addition to being one of the first extant domestic tragedies—and sometimes considered one of the first city comedies—the play is solidly true crime. Based on the historical murder of Thomas Arden, *Arden of Faversham* relentlessly engages with materiality at every level of the murder plot, from the items used in the murder to the persistent connection to physical and geographical place. In the twenty-first century, scholarship has addressed this materiality by studying the play's geographic specificity, use of physical forensic evidence, agentive religious objects, and crucial domestic objects (Adams; Dudgeon; Hamling and Richardson; Richardson; Williamson). While this scholarship details the importance of the material world in *Arden of Faversham*, it still privileges human actors above the multitudinous physical objects that are described. Current scholarship on the play therefore analyzes *Arden of Faversham* through a poetic lens, and neglects the rhetoric that might be carried out by objects and environments. Employing a rhetorical framework therefore opens up new opportunities for viewing this play's materiality, especially by using the principles of material rhetoric and ambient rhetoric, which acknowledge the rhetorical power and contributions of non-human entities. Once viewed through these lenses, the impact of the material world in *Arden of Faversham* becomes clear, as the play cannot be separated from the physical—nor would it make sense. In *A Short Account of Lord Cheyne, Lord Shorland, and Mr. Thomas Arden*, printed in 1739 in Canterbury, Henry

Collyer states that he will describe “the characters of the persons concerned in the tragedy of Arden” (“Scene of a Murder” 9). Throughout this thesis, I will describe the objects and environments concerned in the tragedy of Arden to give them their due after all these centuries. In *Arden of Faversham*, material objects and ambient environments affect and influence the human characters, progress the plot, and alter the entire rhetorical situation, elevating them from mere objects to non-human rhetorical actors within the play.

[II. Literature Review]

The saliency of objects in *Arden of Faversham* has been recognized by early modern and materialist scholars, especially those focusing on cultural and religious connections. Catherine Richardson, an early modern and material culture scholar, states that *Arden of Faversham* is “a strikingly material play,” and that the “play’s geographical specificity is relentless,” both in terms of domestic objects and physical locations (*Domestic Life* 104, 106). In their book, Richardson and Tara Hamling further explore domestic households and material culture, even discussing how the material household can influence the behavior of its occupants, with the household “shaping and being shaped by [behavior],” in terms of religious practices, domestic dynamics, and home-run businesses (4). Their discussion highlights the complex, intertwined relationship between people and their homes. Also, *Arden of Faversham* was written during a boom in material culture, which might explain the play’s involvement with material objects; from 1550 onwards, domestic households dramatically increased the amount of objects within them (Hamling and Richardson 10). This was especially true for the middling sort in England, which the historical and fictional Arden belonged to (Hamling and Richardson 5). Richardson continues that *Arden of Faversham*’s material emphasis gives additional context to the play, creates elements of black comedy, and provides an affective force for the characters—or something that deeply moves, persuades, or sways (*Domestic Life* 107-108). John Henry Adams, a Renaissance and textual studies scholar, also agrees with the affective power of objects in the play, as he discusses objects’ “capacity to shape and to control their users,” such as with the play’s

poisonous painting, crucifix, and prayerbook (232). More so than Richardson and Hamling, Adams brings attention to object agency, specifically in the context of religious objects in *Arden of Faversham* (232). He elevates the material world as potentially “acting independently of their users’ wishes,” showing a world where objects are active participants, versus Richardson’s analysis that objects are passive entities to be studied for cultural and domestic insights (Adams 239; *Domestic Life* 125).

Furthermore, the materiality in *Arden of Faversham* has been analyzed through the lenses of religious objects, forensic evidence, and the domestic household, offering unique though overlapping interpretations (Dudgeon; Hamling and Richardson; Richardson; Williamson). Renaissance scholar Elizabeth Williamson views the religious objects in *Arden of Faversham* through a theological lens, where she discusses prayerbooks and crucifixes as both material vessels and holy items (“The Uses and Abuses” 376). Her investigation adds significant context to the objects and describes the ways an early modern audience (both Catholic or Protestant) could be attached to and influenced by the interlocking nature of religion and objects (“The Uses and Abuses” 376). Religious practice is inherently material; devotions and practice revolve around crucifixes, altars, prayerbooks, and bibles. The profound connection between material objects and religion even bleeds into *Arden of Faversham*, as the play features both Catholic and Protestant religious objects with extreme power. Additionally, Cheryl Dudgeon explores *Arden of Faversham*’s materiality through a forensic evidence lens. Throughout her article, she discusses how material evidence contributes to the murder itself and uncovering the murderers, which includes an investigation of forensic

evidence (Dudgeon 98). In addition to Richardson, Dudgeon recognizes that *Arden of Faversham* is deeply situated in the local contexts of Faversham and the domestic household through place and material evidence (98). She also discusses forensic evidence in the play through a lens of evidentiary law and legal evidence, which analyzes the play's material through yet another lens (Dudgeon 98). With this, Dudgeon provides interesting overlaps between forensic evidence and material rhetoric by claiming that material objects are not "free of rhetoric," as well as discussing the interconnected relationship of material evidence and the characters' dialogue (Dudgeon 100). For example, since there is not much evidence about how *Arden of Faversham* was staged, scholars are unsure about the objects used in props and staging (Dudgeon 99). Dudgeon then wonders which pieces of forensic evidence were staged versus being invoked only through dialogue to the audience (99). She also connects her analysis to forensic rhetoric, which further connects to material rhetoric, as forensic rhetoric investigates how "material objects figure as instruments of proof," in a crime (Dudgeon 100). Specifically, her exploration touches on elements such as Mosby's purse and girdle to Arden's physical corpse and blood as material, forensic evidence for the murder, highlighting the importance of these objects—the murder would not have been revealed or solved without them (Dudgeon 110). Thus, even though there are different lenses to analyze the material in *Arden of Faversham* (such as religious or forensic), each offers valuable insights into the play's interaction with and reliance on physical objects.

However, all objects are important and influential in *Arden of Faversham*, not just the prominent religious and forensic objects. In contrast to a specific class of

objects, Richardson considers the entire domestic household, geographic locations, and physical spaces in the play (*Domestic Life*, “Scene of a Murder”). Her analysis discusses tables, kitchenware, specific rooms within the house, the abbey, an oyster boat, Franklin’s London home, and much more in relation to materiality. Her scholarship shows that *all* objects and places are important to *Arden of Faversham*, not just the salacious poisonous objects or those directly connected to the murder. Each object within the domestic household is crucial to the play. Hamling and Richardson also discuss the importance of the domestic household and house to early modern people by highlighting the connection between “buildings, people, and possessions,” connecting to the material (16). They further solidify the deep connection between people and their houses by talking about the “connections between spaces, objects, and human activity,” and “the mutually constitutive relationship between people and their houses” (Hamling and Richardson 6). With this, people do not only own a house, but they have a back-and-forth relationship with their houses and material places, going back to what Richardson said about people being shaped by their houses, and vice versa. Regardless of the objects of focus, Adams, Dudgeon, Hamling and Richardson, and Richardson all agree that the material world can offer further context and insight into the play, early modern culture, and the importance of the material. The objects in the play are not just merely props or side notes, but significantly inform the play and the characters’ actions. *Arden of Faversham* revolves around specific objects (a poisonous crucifix or a wedding ring or a table) and specific places (London or Faversham Abbey or the Arden’s home) in every scene, making the plot and characters inseparable from

the material. These concrete material objects and environments ground and inform *Arden of Faversham*.

In addition to material culture, early modern scholars have analyzed the interconnected nature of the material and the social in *Arden of Faversham*, which I will extend and connect to Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Richardson highlights the interlocking importance of the domestic space, the material objects within this space, and social forces during the early modern period, an idea that is also discussed by Adams (Adams 236; *Domestic Life* 110). Hamling and Richardson extend this with their definition of materiality: “encompassing not just objects but the whole material world through which individuals understand their social, cultural, and spiritual position,” again showing the overlap of material and social elements (15). Similarly, Adams notes that these interactions are between human subjects, material objects, and social groups, which can “grant objects a form of agency,” again elevating objects’ active participation more than the other scholars (236). Though he doesn’t invoke the theory by name, Adams describes a theory—or really ontology—similar to Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which was pioneered by the prolific French philosopher, Bruno Latour (“On Actor-Network Theory” 369). With the varying entities contributing and shaping the social situation, Latour states that ANT “does not limit itself to human individual actors, but extends the word actor—or actant—to non-human, non-individual entities” (“On Actor-Network Theory” 369). He hopes to include the material in our understanding of the social situation (“On Actor-Network Theory” 370). In addition to Latour’s list, John Law, a sociology scholar, includes “society, organization, agents, and machines,” into the network, adding other human and non-human actors into the

rhetorical situation (Law 380). Therefore, in *Arden of Faversham*, the number of rhetorical “actors” (as opposed to dramatic actors) that inform the play blossoms beyond just human actors, and could include all the material objects, places and environments, various organizations, and society at large that can enrich our understanding of the play. The addition of place and environment particularly connects to Richardson’s emphasis on the connection between material objects and geographical locations (*Domestic Life* 125). ANT thus informs the analysis of *Arden of Faversham* by opening the door to non-human actors; these non-human actors can now be considered in the rhetorical situation of the play.

Though ANT is a social theory, it can be useful and applicable to rhetorical analysis (Prenosil 98; Rickert, “Whole of the Moon” 136). And, therefore, the rhetorical analysis of *Arden of Faversham*. As ANT incorporates things and non-human actors into social analysis, space is made to incorporate things and non-human actors into rhetoric, too. Social situations and communication are profoundly rhetorical, leading to significant interdisciplinary overlap between sociology and rhetoric. Thomas Rickert, a rhetorical scholar, explains that even Latour’s work on ANT, science, and politics “require[s] the connective work of rhetorical appeal,” to connect “knowledge and fact” (“Whole of the Moon” 139). Through Latour’s complex discussion on political representations and facts, Rickert states that the idea of politics has been stretched enough by Latour to include new elements, so scholars can therefore “stretch rhetoric to include elements that it has customarily excluded,” too, such as the non-human actors (“Whole of the Moon” 139). Joshua Prenosil, a rhetorical scholar, agrees that Latour’s scholarship on politics opens the door for rhetoric (as well as his scholarship on

sociology, anthropology, and philosophy), with Rickert and Prenosil both citing Latour's "Dingpolitik" (Prenosil 97; "Whole of the Moon" 136). In relation to ANT, Rickert concludes that Latour "takes the objects that surround us and conjoins them with the urgencies of our concerns. Objects become rhetorical because they are inseparable from what engages us," so the network becomes not just a social theory, but a network of rhetorical actors, too ("Whole of the Moon" 136). Additionally, Prenosil connects Latour and ANT to rhetoric through inartistic proofs, or rhetorical proofs that are pre-existing and not created by the rhetor (98, 105-106). Using inartistic proofs and the connection back to Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, Prenosil claims that ANT could even be considered a rhetorical theory (98). Since ANT includes material non-human actors, there's no reason why rhetoricians can't use ANT to study materiality, Prenosil claims (110). Therefore, ANT becomes an avenue to apply the study of the social and the addition of non-human actors to rhetoric. The actors are transformed from actors—or actants—in the network to rhetorical actors in the rhetorical situation. In terms of applicability, ANT offers an avenue to rhetorically analyze and validate the material in *Arden of Faversham*.

However, the term "rhetorical situation" needs to be defined, as I will refer to this term throughout this article. Lloyd Bitzer first defined the rhetorical situation as "a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance" (5), when he tried to explore "the context in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse" (1). While non-human actors do not create traditional "utterances," their presence can still alter the rhetorical situation, making them rhetorical actors. However, Richard Vatz states that he "would not say 'rhetoric is

situational,' but that situations are rhetorical," which puts rhetoric at the forefront of the meaning-making process (159). He further tackles Bitzer's definition by stating that "one never runs out of context. One never runs out of facts to describe a situation," perhaps allowing a rhetorical situation—or situational rhetoric—to have endless possibilities or contexts (156). Non-human rhetorical actors are another contextual factor. Building on both Bitzer and Vatz, Garret and Xiao extend the definition by adding more possibilities to the rhetorical situation: "the rhetorical situation is an ever-changing spiral of interactions among entities and groups which shift roles and shape each other even when in opposition" (39). Objects and environments can be included among these entities that interact and shape others in the rhetorical situation, be them human actors or non-human actors. The rhetorical situation has room for all of these entities, contexts, and endless possibilities; it becomes the context in which rhetoric takes place, which includes human actors, non-human actors, environments, locations, speech, gesture, affect, and every ambient background detail. Rickert even clarifies by stating that "rhetoric emerges in situations, or contexts, which give place and bearing to what transpires," further showing the interconnectedness of context and rhetorical situation ("Whole of the Moon" 137). Ultimately, if all discourse can be considered rhetoric, then there can be limitless rhetorical situations (which extends to limitless rhetorical situations in *Arden of Feversham*, or any other drama). The material remains an integral part of the context.

Furthermore, the idea of ANT—and its inclusion of non-human actors—connects to material rhetoric and rhetorical actors. The material world can affect, sway, persuade, or suade humans (Marback 60; McNely 221; Stormer 354). Material rhetoric

therefore adds more actors (human and non-human) to the rhetorical situation, which can be applied to *Arden of Faversham* due to its rigorous materiality. Throughout my thesis, I will use the term “material rhetoric” for this phenomenon, though some scholars will use materialist rhetoric, rhetorical materialism, the materiality of rhetoric, materiality, materialists, or simply refer to new materialism and “the material turn” in scholarship (Adams; Clary-Lemon; Marback; McCann; Pedersen; Richardson; Sencindiver; Stormer; Valletly). In general, the interdisciplinary study of new materialism emerged in the twenty-first century with the material turn, which moves away from the linguistic turn that mainly privileged linguistic discourse over the understudied material, which reconsidered rhetorical agency (Clary-Lemon; Sencindiver). New materialism also explores the links between discourse and objects (Sencindiver). Material rhetoric scholar Bryan McCann calls for a “need to better account for the material character of rhetoric itself,” suggesting the inclusion of non-human actors (1). He also provides a definition with: “materialist rhetoric refers to the uptake of materialism by rhetoricians,” discussing the link from materialism and the material turn to rhetoric (McCann 2) He continues by connecting material rhetoric to embodied rhetoric and details how the material world impacts us as a social force, further connecting to ANT (McCann 3). More so, though, the material world can persuade and influence humans and has the “suasive potential residing in all kinds of matter” (McCann 13). Material rhetoric opens up the idea that rhetoric is *not* “uninhibited by forces beyond the intentions of the rhetoric,” because the material or ambient conditions surrounding rhetoric might not have been intended by the rhetor (McCann 2). And with material rhetoric, forces might occur without a human

rhetor/actor; the non-human actors can potentially stand alone. Therefore, if only the linguistic aspects of *Arden of Faversham* are explored, part of the rhetorical picture is missing if the material isn't considered. The material is rhetorical (McCann 13).

To further the rhetorical picture, humans are ultimately vulnerable to objects, and can therefore be influenced and affected by the material world. Rhetorical theorist Richard Marback states that rhetoric can be an “embodied encounter of humans with objects,” as humans are ultimately vulnerable to objects just as we can be vulnerable to other people (Marback 63). Through my analysis of *Arden of Faversham*, the characters are vulnerable to objects and therefore affected, too. Nathan Stormer, a rhetorical scholar, also discusses the idea of vulnerability, which he states is necessary for material suasion (361). He states that vulnerability is “often recognized ontologically as a basic kind of openness to being affected and affecting in both positive and negative ways,” which makes humans more susceptible to the material due to our openness and vulnerabilities (Stormer 361). Suasion implies a more subtle and less overt form of persuasion; humans might try to persuade each other through classical rhetorical means, but objects suade more passively. Indeed, McCann also explains that materialists believe that the material world can have agency and “exerts force on human affairs,” not unlike Adams (1). Additionally, Stormer describes the accidental nature of both affect and vulnerability, showing that affect is something that humans don't necessarily have control over; objects will affect us whether we want them to or not (354). Human-object interactions have just as much potential to influence the rhetorical situation and persuade as human-human interactions; part of “giving objects their due,” is acknowledging the ways objects and environments can impact humans (Marback 52).

These principles can therefore be applied to *Arden of Faversham*, as the human-object interactions influence the play's rhetorical situation, the plot, and the characters themselves. Ultimately, objects can "propel us and repel us and even compel us," which can add further context to the characters' actions and motivations within the play (Marback 57). Therefore, Marback and Stormer seem to agree about our vulnerability to objects as well as the material's affect on us, though they communicate the idea of "affect" with different verbiage.

Additionally, even though the material world affects different individuals in different ways, affect is unavoidable. The characters of *Arden of Faversham* cannot escape affect any more than modern humans can. Marback explains that this individuality is due to humans projecting or mirroring their "intentions and understandings," onto objects (51). Different people might mirror different meanings onto objects, changing the way they're affected. Brian McNely, a writing and rhetoric scholar, adds that our interactions with the material can help us "feel something we would not have otherwise felt," showing again that objects can affect humans in unique ways that human-human interactions alone might not produce; there is more to the equation than just humans (221). He also explains that even if we try to "evade things," the material world has a way of still affecting and influencing humans regardless, connecting to the inevitability of vulnerability that Marback and Stormer described (McNely 221). To continue the idea of inevitability, Stormer discusses rhetoric by accident, or "that affect occurs for no more reason than simply being and is not exclusive to human corporeality;" we are affected because we exist and because we are vulnerable to the material (354). He further connects this to vulnerability by stating that

“the relationship between affect and vulnerability is about the accidental,” or the unplanned occurrences of rhetoric, such as the unplanned and unanticipated material influence (354). With this, Stormer connects affect, vulnerability, and the material together. Throughout his piece, Stormer makes it clear that affect is something out of people’s control, almost like an instinct. Humans are therefore vulnerable—or affected—by objects regardless of our own desires. Our material openness is unavoidable (Stormer 362). McNely also seems to connect to this interpretation by stating that the material world can affect us “without [our] knowledge or without phenomenological intentionality” (225). Ultimately, Marback, McNely, and Stormer agree about this inevitability of being affected—or influenced, persuaded, suaded, or swayed—by the material world, therefore making objects capable of altering the rhetorical situation as non-human rhetorical actors. That is therefore the crux of material rhetoric: the material world is able to participate in rhetoric alongside humans. Thus, material rhetoric can be defined as the rhetoric enacted by material entities. Throughout my thesis, I will show the varied ways that the material world participates in rhetoric alongside human actors in *Arden of Faversham*.

However, in addition to material rhetoric, ambient rhetoric further extends the elements participating in the rhetorical situation. Ambient rhetoric acknowledges the rhetorical capacity of the entire environment and ambient conditions in which rhetoric might occur. Since *Arden of Faversham* features concrete places with ambient conditions, this is also relevant. Rickert, the author of *Ambient Rhetoric*, attempts to move beyond the human/non-human binary of material rhetoric with his theory of ambient rhetoric, which includes “the material environment, things (including the

technological), our own embodiment, and a complex understanding of ecological relationality” (3). A theory of ambient rhetoric would take all aspects of an environment into consideration (not just the material), such as sounds, lights, weather, temperature, visuals, environments, backgrounds, and any other sensory elements. All of these factors can influence the rhetorical situation. Ultimately, Rickert tries to “dissolve the assumed separation between what is (privileged) human doing and what is passively material” (3). He calls for an ambient age which would rethink “rhetoric as ambient” (Rickert 3). His work is also deeply informed by Latour’s work on ANT (McCann 13). Rickert continues that ambience or ambient rhetoric moves beyond just subject/rhetor to acknowledge the “active role that the material and informational environment takes in human development, dwelling, and culture” (3), and the “complex give-and-take we have with our material surroundings” (5). Ambient rhetoric therefore moves beyond just material objects to also include all multisensory aspects that influence the rhetorical situation (Rickert 4). However, it’s important to note that Rickert’s ideas on ambience were first connected to Indigenous knowledge, such as the idea that “the people, the knowledge, and the land [are] a single, integrated whole,” highlighting the interconnected nature of humans and the material (Clary-Lemon; McGregor 395). Even rhetorical and material work that studies embodiment and affect build on Indigenous knowledge (Clary-Lemon). Ultimately, ambient rhetoric is relevant to *Arden of Faversham* due to the multitudinous environmental factors within the play, from fog and darkness to sound. Rickert does agree with the material rhetoric scholars on the point of the material world’s affect on us, though, using that same verbiage. His description also connects to the idea that rhetorical influences happen inevitably without

human consent or doing (*Ambient Rhetoric* 6). While Marback and Stormer use the word “vulnerability” for this phenomenon, Rickert uses “attunement” (*Ambient Rhetoric* 8). Scholars use vulnerability to describe the unavoidable, inescapable, accidental, and inevitable nature of our material openness and affective states (Marback; Stormer). Rickert’s attunement instead describes a person’s inseparability from the ambient, our “achievement of some sense of harmony,” with the ambient world (*Ambient Rhetoric* 8). Both describe our entanglement, but in different ways. In the end, Rickert’s theory builds on material rhetoric by adding ambient factors to the rhetorical situation.

In addition to ambient rhetoric, place-based rhetoric is extremely relevant to *Arden of Faversham*, due to the play’s sustained engagement with geographical places and domestic spaces. The play doesn’t reference a fictional setting, but the actual town of Faversham in Kent, England. The fact that Thomas Arden was murdered in Faversham in 1551 solidifies the play within a specific time and place, as it is a true crime narrative based on historical fact. Since the play was written in the late 1580s, the 1551 setting was just one generation earlier. And, with an anonymous author, readers are forced to look more deeply into all of these elements that connect to time, place, and the material opposed to assumptions based on authorship. All of these factors set the play in a tangibly real community with distinctive landmarks with which readers might be familiar, unlike some plays that have distant past or even fantastical settings. As *Arden of Faversham* is a profoundly material play, it is also “insistently geographically rooted” (“Scene of a Murder” 2). In addition to writing about the materiality of the domestic household, Richardson also explores site-specificity in early modern drama,

finding that site can be “important to our understanding of early modern drama,” especially with domestic tragedies (“Scene of a Murder” 1). Place becomes salient for local performances—especially those close to Faversham—which creates links between theatre and archaeology (“Scene of a Murder” 3). To connect back to Rickert’s theory of ambient rhetoric, where a play is performed (whether a particular theatre or particular city), changes the context, which Richardson discusses (“Scene of a Murder” 4). Seeing *Arden of Faversham* performed in London would be different than seeing it performed in Faversham or greater Kent. Ultimately, Richardson suggests that due to place-based rhetoric, the play cannot be separated from its history and setting in Faversham, which is solidified by the material and ambient rhetoric scholars, too (“Scene of a Murder” 19).

Additionally, scholarship doesn’t have to be labeled “place-based rhetoric” to connect with the overlapping importance of time, place, and the material. Steven Pedersen, an English and rhetoric scholar, agrees that place can play an active role in how events unfold in literature, even advocating for a “material-epistemic methodology” for analyzing literary texts (1). As with Richardson, he states that place can impact history and history can impact place, which is relevant to *Arden of Faversham* since the play is rigorously place-based. Pedersen continues by quoting James Berlin, stating that “rhetoric, any rhetoric, ought to be situated within the economic, social, and political conditions of its historical moment, if it is to be understood. . . this means looking at it within its material conditions,” which I am trying to accomplish with *Arden of Faversham* (Berlin 4). The idea of including the social even connects back to many of the ANT and affect theory scholars. Furthermore, the

humanist geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, discusses the importance of place, too, with statements such as, “place is a center of meaning constructed by experience” (152). He elaborates that place can be a city or region, such as Faversham or Kent, but place could also be the home itself, or even places within the home, such as a fireplace hearth or dining room table (Tuan 152). Tuan’s interpretation of place therefore connects to the domesticity of *Arden of Faversham* as well as material and place-based rhetoric, as he discusses how these domestic places can be “a center of meaning for the family” (153). To further connect to material rhetoric and affect theory, Tuan points out the importance of objects as well as the bond between objects and humans, which he describes as “sentiment” versus the verbiage of “affect” or “suasion” from other scholars (153). Ultimately, Tuan’s work, which was completed in 1975, seems to be an early example of materialism, and remains highly relevant to domestic tragedies, too.

To add a final layer of depth, affect theory overlaps with both material and ambient rhetoric, showing significant agreement between psychologists and rhetoricians. Since the material and ambient world profoundly affect the characters in *Arden of Faversham*, affect theory becomes relevant. The material world causes affect. Stephanie Trigg describes affect as having an “ontological, even physiological precedence,” as well as resulting in an “unconscious, pre-discursive bodily response,” connecting to humans being vulnerable to the material world and having an embodiment with rhetoric (5). Another affect scholar, Erin Sullivan, agrees with the embodied and non-conscious qualities of affect with, “affective experiences [are] deeply embodied, non- (or pre-) conscious, and non-verbal,” also connecting back to the accidental or inevitable nature of affect (189). Trigg also adds that affect is “aligned

with the phenomenological and social inquiry,” agreeing with McNely’s comment on phenomenology and the idea of social influence with Adams, Latour, Richardson, and ANT (Trigg 6). Furthermore, another affect scholar, Neil Valleley, views materiality as a “relationship between objects, ideas, bodies, and environments,” bringing together again the theories of material rhetoric, ambient rhetoric, ANT, and affect theory (46). I bring all of these theories into conversation with each other due to their overlaps and relevancies to *Arden of Faversham*. Valleley further adds that through the combination of affect theory and a study of the material, he sees a place in scholarship for an “object-centric literary critical practice” (46). Sarah Ahmed also adds to Valleley’s conversation on affect theory and the material by discussing how humans are affected by objects—both positively or negatively (33). Humans can be more affected by an object if it’s connected to a good or bad memory, connected to someone we like or dislike; we can be affected by the location of an object (connecting to place-based rhetoric and ambient rhetoric), and by the objects surrounding an object (Ahmed 33). Not only can an object itself be affective, but all the conditions of an object, too, which further nods to ambient rhetoric (Ahmed 34). Finally, within the overlaps of all of these various theories and scholarship, there resides a place to analyze the material world of *Arden of Faversham*, taking all aspects of the rhetorical picture into consideration.

[III. Material Events in *Arden of Faversham*]

With the above theoretical framework in mind, I propose that the objects and environments in *Arden of Faversham* are non-human actors: both rhetorical actors as well as dramatic actors in the play. Just as we would consider the communicative value and impact of a human actor's actions and words, we must also consider the non-human actors present (the material world, including objects and environments), too. To properly understand *Arden of Faversham*, or any rhetoric, one must analyze actions, words, and objects together. The material entities depicted in *Arden of Faversham* are rhetorical actors because of their impact on the rhetorical situation and communication. The theories of material rhetoric, ambient rhetoric, place-based rhetoric, Actor-Network Theory, and affect theory can therefore be used to make this case in *Arden of Faversham*; all these theories elevate objects/materials to important and crucial parts of the rhetorical picture. The material entities are also dramatic actors in the play because they further the plot, inform to the action of the play, and affect other actors; an actor in a play does not have to have a speaking part to be important. Indeed, the Oxford English Dictionary defines "actor" as the following in one definition: "A thing which or person who performs or takes part in an action; a doer, an agent," showing that things can take part in the action of an event, in this case a play ("Actor, n"). In the appendices, I include a list of the material objects (Appendix A) and places (Appendix B) in the play, elevating all the non-human actors to important members of the cast. Appendix C lists all the material objects found in the stage directions. By taking *all* the actors in *Arden of*

Faversham into consideration, scholars can begin to see all the intricate interactions in the play, between human/human actors as well as human/non-human actor interactions.

Of course, the objects and environments in *Arden of Faversham* will not have speaking parts or be able to move on their own accord, as human rhetorical and dramatic actors can. An example of how objects function as non-human actors in a play could follow the below pattern, which mimics the layout of drama by giving non-human actors a part. By giving the non-human rhetorical actors a part, they become dramatic actors in the play, as their contributions are significant enough to warrant giving them a part. This methodology also makes room for the affect that occurs due to the material world. Though the non-human actors do not have speaking parts, their roles are still important and worthy of analysis. Throughout my thesis, I will use yellow highlighting to differentiate my non-human additions from the original text of *Arden of Faversham*:

HUMAN ACTOR 1: Dialogue and/or action

HUMAN ACTOR 2: Dialogue and/or action

NON-HUMAN ACTOR 1: Affects and impacts Human Actor 1

HUMAN ACTOR 1: Dialogue and/or action

NON-HUMAN ACTOR 2: Affects and impacts Human Actor 2

HUMAN ACTOR 2: Dialogue and/or action

I call this methodology Non-Human Actor Elevation, as the non-human actors (whether objects or environments) are elevated to their appropriate status/recognition as rhetorical actors and dramatic actors. In this representative example, the human actors are conversing with dialogue and performing any necessary movements, actions, and gestures within a play. Additionally, since words, actions, and objects are interwoven

and important in the communicative picture, we also take into consideration the non-human actors. The non-human actors don't speak or gesture, but they affect and impact the human actors, providing a crucial element of context that will influence the human actors; the scene or situation would not be the same without these non-human material actors. *Arden of Faversham* is rife with deeply affective and salient objects that impact the characters and the play itself. Throughout the following section, I will show how this functions specifically in *Arden of Faversham*, though this framework could be applied to any play.

First, though, I will give a brief summary of *Arden of Faversham*. Alice Arden wants to kill her husband. She's having an affair with a local man of Faversham, Mosby, and the only way their love can be realized is to murder Thomas Arden. The pair tries a bountiful amount of murder plots—from poisoned paintings and crucifixes to bumbling assassins to poisoned broth to jumping Arden in London to Rainham Down to Faversham—all without success. By the end, there is an entire cast of characters caught up in the murder plot, some for monetary gain, others for the promise of their own loves. Arden is finally stabbed to death in his own parlor. The inept murderers then leave a trail of evidence within the home as well as behind Faversham Abbey, where they dump the body. All the murderers, including Alice and Mosby, are then put to death at the end of the play for their crimes. Throughout each stage of the murder, though, the play and characters are deeply engaged with the material. Most of their murder plots involve several physical objects, and the play is intensely situated in geographical place, whether within the domestic household or in Kent, England. These

objects, places, and environments are repeatedly referenced throughout *Arden of Faversham*, which acts to ground and inform the play at every level.

Even within the first scene of *Arden of Faversham*, Thomas Arden states that his life is tormented by “foul objects that offend mine eyes,” immediately connecting the play to the material world (1.11). In this scene, Arden witnesses Mosby wearing the ring “which at our [Arden and Alice’s] marriage day the priest put on,” alerting Arden that his wife is likely having a romantic affair with Mosby (1.17). Arden is not initially offended by Mosby, the human actor, but the object of the ring itself. The golden ring is inserted into the rhetorical situation and affects Arden because the ring is more than just a material object, it is also a symbol of the Ardens’ marriage. Also, the wedding ring would have been very easy for Arden to recognize as “early modern wedding rings had no standard form” (1.16-17n). Additionally, in early modern thought, rings could be connected to the Church and a woman’s chastity, as women could wear a “gold ring as a sign of [their] excellences and incorruption” (King 93). Marriage was also seen as a holy sacrament and commitment between partners, where the husband would present his wife with a “blessed ring that signified marriage...[that] was given for love and as a token of fidelity,” connecting Alice’s betrayal with a religious betrayal, too (Aries and Duby, *Passions of the Renaissance* 85; *Revelations of the Medieval* 130). Therefore, Alice giving this ring to Mosby is even more preposterous and affective, since having the affair broke her vows of chastity and the sacraments of marriage that the ring is supposed to symbolize. Due to this, Arden is vulnerable to the object, which elicits an affective response, just as audience members during the early modern period would be

offended by the notion of cuckoldry (Ingram 105). Following the above pattern, this interaction could be described by the following:

THOMAS ARDEN: *Witnessed Mosby wearing Alice Arden's wedding ring*

RING: Affects Arden negatively due to the ring's connection to Alice and Arden's marriage, the realization that Alice is having an affair, and the aspects of religion and cuckoldry

ARDEN: And those foul objects that offend mine eyes... / Nay, on his finger did I spy the ring / Which on our marriage day the priest put on. / Can any grief be half so great as this?

RING: Continues to affect Arden negatively, causing him extreme grief

FRANKLIN: Comfort thyself, sweet friend; it is not strange / That women will be false and wavering (1.11-20).

If not for the ring, this non-human actor in the play, Arden would not have been alerted to his wife's affair, nor would he be feeling this pain currently. The ring effectively progresses the plot due to Arden's emotional connection to his wife, making this material object a smart choice by the playwright(s). The ring acts as a multiplier that further affects Arden in ways another non-human actor (or human actor) might not achieve. Without the ring's additional affect, Arden's reaction might have been lessened, which would alter the rhetorical situation, outcome, and dialogue.

Additionally, in the instance with the ring, an object that used to positively affect Arden has now shifted to a source of great pain due to the negative feelings and intentions he now brings to the ring, as objects can mirror our understandings (Marback 51). The ring itself does not hold any power alone, but is able to affect Arden—and the

play itself—due to the extreme emotions, meanings, and vulnerabilities Arden brings to the ring, as he states above, “Can any grief be half so great as this?” (1.18). The material ring therefore intensifies the affect and emotion that Arden feels, showing that the non-human actor impacted the characters and plot more so than the human actor of Mosby; Arden was affected more deeply than he would have been in the absence of the ring. Ultimately, Arden is so profoundly affected by the sight of the ring that he wishes he was dead: this “makes me wish that for this veil of heaven / The earth hung over my head and covered me” (1.12-13). This example shows how objects can “repulse” and “repel” human actors, which can also inform the audience and progress the plot like any other interaction between rhetorical actors, human or non-human (Marback 57; McNely 225). Therefore, the example could also be detailed with the following:

ARDEN: *Witnessed Mosby wearing Alice Arden’s wedding ring*

RING: Repulses and repels Arden

ARDEN: *Feels grief so intense that he wishes he was dead*

However, material affect is not always negative. Alice sends her lover, Mosby, a “pair of silver dice / With which we played for kisses many a time,” to remind him of the joy they had shared together (1.122-123). In this situation, Alice hopes that the dice themselves will act on Mosby and emotionally sway him from ending the affair by reminding him of their love, which is a potential outcome of this human/non-human actor interaction. With this, Alice even seems to be aware of the power and affect of the material world, since she uses the dice as her message device. Instead of Alice and Mosby having a human/human interaction by talking, she decides on this alternative

course of action. Without uttering words, Alice hopes the dice will communicate a message, such as:

MOSBY: *Sees the dice from Alice*

DICE: Positively affects and compels Mosby due to the physical reminder of using the dice in a kissing game together

However, the situation does not play out as Alice had hoped. The dice are a physical representation of their romantic relationship status as, in performance, “Mosby’s decision to reject Alice might...be underlined by his returning the silver dice” (1.184n). Though Mosby states, “Henceforth know me not,” as he returns the dice, the object itself gives weight and finality to his words due to the “interconnectedness of actions, objects, and words,” making it more powerful than just using words alone (1.184; Marback 47).

MOSBY: Where is your husband?

ALICE: ‘Tis now high water, and he is at the quay.

MOSBY: There let him be; henceforth know me not.

MOSBY: *Returns silver dice to Alice*

DICE: Affects Alice negatively as returning the dice is a physical representation not of their relationship, but of it ending

ALICE: Is this the end of all thy solemn oaths? (1.181-184).

Therefore, the addition of the material non-human actor along with the human actors adds gravity to an already tense situation. Without the dice entering the equation, Mosby would not first have known that Alice wanted to reconcile, and Alice wouldn’t have known that Mosby intended to terminate their relationship. Without all the actors

in this scene, including the non-human actor of the dice, the message wouldn't have been communicated as solidly nor the plot advanced in the same fashion. The playwrights' choice and specificity of objects matters and impacts the rhetorical situation within *Arden of Feversham*.

Additionally, the dice could be affective to Mosby and Alice due to dice's connection with fortune, chance, luck, and fate in early modern thought, which could all be entangled into a dice roll (Akopyan 217). Is a desirable roll simply the work of chance and luck or was it preordained? Dice themselves can also connect to gambling (which could be seen as an immoral activity), mirroring the immoral nature of the extramarital affair, especially since the dice are used to represent that relationship (Akopyan 217). The dice might function something like the following with this additional information:

MOSBY: Where is your husband?

ALICE: 'Tis now high water, and he is at the quay.

MOSBY: There let him be; henceforth know me not.

MOSBY: *Returns silver dice to Alice*

DICE: Affects Alice negatively as returning the dice is a physical representation now not of their relationship, but of it ending. However, the dice also affects both Alice and Mosby due to their connotations in early modern thought.

ALICE: Is this the end of all thy solemn oaths? (1.181-184).

The dice (and all material objects) are therefore more powerful and affective to communication than previously thought, highlighting material rhetoric. Objects within the play affect characters not only through their personal connections to the objects, but

also through cultural thought and connotations. Ultimately, the “intentions and understandings,” that Alice projected on the dice while trying to reconcile were very different than those Mosby mirrored on the dice when he returned them, showing that one material object can represent different affecting emotions depending on the person, further complicating the rhetorical situation as well as the play’s plot (Marback 51). Once they do reconcile, Mosby accepts the dice back, now looking on them fondly as their love has been reunited; the dice affect him differently as he now views Alice and their relationship in a positive light once more. The material props (non-human actors) in this scene inform just as much as the dialogue itself, again detailing how these material non-human actors are just as important as the human actors to our understanding of *Arden of Faversham*.

Furthermore, some objects can reflect status simply due to the rules and regulations that humans apply to them—the meanings and intentions we assign to the material that is not inherent in the object itself. For example, Edward III “forbid anyone under the rank of gentleman from wearing a sword,” which causes conflict when Arden yells at Mosby, “So, sirrah, you may not wear a sword” (1.310n; 1.309). Arden becomes so enraged at the sight of Mosby wearing a sword that he states, “The next time that I take thee near my house, / Instead of legs I’ll make thee crawl on stumps,” showing how deeply the object affected him (1.315-316). However, as with the wedding ring, Arden is not upset by the object itself, but what it represents: a symbol for Mosby’s new gentleman status, but also potentially a phallic symbol that manifests further fears of cuckoldry (Richardson 111). Though Latour and ANT are less interested in the symbolism of objects, material rhetoric and affect theory value the concerns and

intentions that humans bring to objects, making symbolism relevant. If human actors view an object as a salient symbol, they are more likely to be affected by that non-human actor. Therefore, the sight of the sword provoked Arden to the point that he was persuaded to get into an altercation with Mosby, which is another example of powerful human/non-human interactions. The conflict ultimately arises because the two men value and view this material sword in two different ways based on their own experiences, thoughts, and feelings, which they bring to and reflect off the sword. Mosby feels that he deserves to wear a sword due to his social mobility, whereas Arden views the object as something worthy that Mosby has not earned. Even though the sword acted as a catalyst for this argument, the root of the problem is really Arden devaluing those from lower classes, and he projects those prejudices onto the material object. Mosby reacts because he is highly vulnerable to the sword, as it represents achievement for him.

SWORD: The sword negatively affects Arden because he is enraged by the sword representing Mosby's new social status; this is tied up into cultural thought about who can and cannot wear a sword as well as Arden's own sense of superiority.

STAGE DIRECTION: *Then Arden draws forth Mosby's sword*

ARDEN: So, sirrah, you may not wear a sword / ... You goodman botcher.

SWORD: The sword is proof of Mosby's social mobility, a symbol of his success. Therefore, Mosby is deeply hurt when this important object is taken away.

MOSBY: Ah Master Arden, you have injured me (1.309-317).

Both Mosby and Arden were affected by the sword and felt things they wouldn't have felt if the sword wasn't present. The sword is a rhetorical actor in this exchange. And, in general, all our sartorial choices and accessories (in this case, a sword), can be very affective and reveal information about the human actor. For example, Mosby not only tries to show his elevated status by wearing a sword (a reflection of his identity), but also by wearing higher class clothes, as Arden states that Mosby now "bravely jets it in his silken gown," again showing disgust (1.29). During the early modern period, clothing and accessories reflected status, as not everyone was allowed (or had the means) to these kinds of objects; in fact, "clothing choices were fraught with questions about the appropriate relationship between status, moral integrity, and cloth," as Arden highlights (Richardson 48). Both the affective power of the sword and clothes continue to show how the "material life is drenched with feeling," which is throughout *Arden of Faversham* (Stormer 373).

In terms of affective power, the poisonous objects in the play straddle the line between non-human actors that simply affect or persuade humans to having actual agency of their own, extending our view of non-human actors (Adams 232). For example, both the poisoned painting and the poisoned crucifix are "physical objects invested with unusual power," as they can murder the viewer themselves without human intervention as these objects are capable of acting on their own (Adams 238-239). Instead of simply altering the rhetorical situation like the previous non-human actors, these poisonous objects, such as the poisonous painting and crucifix, can physically harm a person. More than any other objects in the play, these deadly, poisoned objects might "dissolve the assumed separation between what is human doing

and what is passively material,” as these objects can take on activity (Rickert 3). While other murder attempts involved Alice putting poison in Arden’s porridge or Black Will attempting to stab Arden, the poisoned objects can murder without a human consciously wielding them, which changes the dynamic of human/object interactions.

Firstly, Alice and Mosby try to commission a poisoned painting to kill Arden. The painting can be considered a non-human actor with unusual agency since it can murder a human actor on its own. Mosby describes the painting with the following:

I happened on a painter yesternight,
The only cunning man of Christendom,
For he can temper poison with his oil
Whoso looks upon the work he draws
Shall, with the beams that issue from his sight,
Suck venom to his breast and slay himself (1.226-231).

Alice is immediately horrified, stating, “Ay, but Mosby, that is dangerous,” as the object negatively affects her due to the danger not only of the poison, but also of the Catholic religious undertones in Protestant England (1.234). She is also negatively affected by the idea of beams from her sight sucking up the venom, which connects to an early modern understanding of vision (1.230n). Galenic theory states that beams, vital spirits, or rays were involved in vision, with these physical rays connecting humans to the object they viewed (Crombie 190). Also, when humans view an object, “something comes towards us from the sensed object,” solidifying why Alice thinks the painting is dangerous (Crombie 189). From her scientific understanding, the painting very well could be physically dangerous and harm her without even touching it; one might accidentally look at the painting and suck up the venom (making it even more affective and full of agentive power). For an early modern audience, the inclusion of

poison could be connected to magic, witchcraft, and the supernatural, which fosters links to religion. The descriptor of “cunning” is also connected to practitioners of magic in Britain. Therefore, by Mosby calling the painter a “cunning man of Christendom,” he is connecting the painter to both magic users and Christianity. The overlap of someone simultaneously being Christian and utilizing witchcraft would likely have been salacious to readers. Due to these elements, Alice finally concludes that she’ll “have no such picture,” perhaps rejecting not only this specific murder weapon, but also the idolatry of Catholicism and dangers of witchcraft (1.243). This interaction might be envisioned with the following:

MOSBY: *Describes painting, as detailed above*

PAINTING: Affects and scares Alice due to its potential to poison someone as well as the painting's connection to Catholicism, idolatry, witchcraft, and the supernatural.

ALICE: Ay, but Mosby, that is dangerous (1.234).

The painting possesses unusual autonomy, since it has the agency to poison someone without human action at the time of the murder (Adams 236). Alice is deeply affected not only by the threat of the object, but also by the painter’s description, which shows the interconnected nature of actions, objects, and words. Of course, the play does not depict one of the poisonous objects actually murdering someone, so we only have the word of the painter on this front. If the painting is poisonous, the affect (and effect) of these human/non-human interactions could be catastrophic.

Arden of Faversham also features a poisoned crucifix as a potential murder weapon, overtly connecting to the threat of Catholicism even more so than the painting.

Since the play was written after the Protestant Reformation in a time of anti-Catholic sentiments, Catholic objects and references often had to be secularized in literature or drama, usually by giving them domestic themes (“Domestication” 475). An example would be that crucifixes were frequently inherited during the early modern period, connecting them with family and stability opposed to religion; the object becomes a mere family heirloom opposed to a representation of Catholicism (475). By translating the objects “into new contexts,” a crucifix might not always connect to Catholicism in drama—at least overtly (“Domestication” 475-476). This allowed playwrights to get away with including them in drama, such as John Webster’s *The White Devil*, which prominently features a crucifix as a sign of family unity (“Domestication” 473). The poisoned crucifix in *Arden of Faversham*, however, upsets these expectations due to its supernatural and poisonous elements, perhaps connecting back to Protestant superstitions (even though Catholic and Protestant belief systems weren’t that fundamentally different). These additional religious and supernatural elements imbue the crucifix with even more affective power. Mosby describes the crucifix with the following:

I do remember once in secret talk
You [the painter] told me how you could compound art
A crucifix impoisoned,
Whoso look upon it should wax blind,
And with the scent be stifled, that ere long
He should die poisoned that did view it well (1.604-609).

For Protestants, this crucifix would connect to much of the anti-Catholic thoughts, superstitions, and witchcraft as the painting, but be even more salient due to the overt references (and perhaps even connecting Catholicism to danger). The crucifix would

also be extremely affective to Catholics, too, as a poisoned and murderous crucifix could be offensive and a bastardization of their faith, especially since they believed that crucifixes were imbued with religious power as “sacred embodiments of God’s mercy” (Adams 236; “Domestication” 473). These ideals have now been shifted to an adulterous wife using this holy object to murder her husband, something that would have been outrageous, salacious, and tantalizingly intriguing to an early modern audience. The fact that *Arden of Faversham* is based on true crime rather than a fictional tale increases an audience’s interest and anxieties. These events were real (albeit dramatized), giving them concrete material weight in the world. Like the painting, the crucifix is dangerous because of the poison as well as the connections to idolatry (Adams 238). Therefore, Alice is profoundly affected by the crucifix not only due to the danger, but because she seems to be a Protestant according to the prayerbook she uses in a later scene. Of course, all citizens were required to be Protestant. Therefore, her concern for Catholic objects and her willingness to destroy her Protestant prayerbook might mean she is only Protestant in public (though this remains unconvincing within the play).

Ultimately, though material objects are frequently used in the murder plots, Alice seems to have limitations about which objects she’ll deploy (Adams 238). The objects she’ll consider using are related to those that affect her positively versus negatively. Since Alice does agree to buy regular poison to put into Arden’s broth, it is not just the idea of poison itself that upsets Alice, but the instability of the painting and crucifix—objects that she doesn’t completely understand (I.279-280). She can likely comprehend how a vial of poison operates, but struggles to understand the logistics of

how the painting or crucifix function. Due to this, Alice eventually convinces Mosby to abandon the dangerous idea of the painting with, “Your trick of poisoned pictures we dislike; / Some other poison would do better far” (I.277-78). She then accepts a dram of poison instead (1.284). Therefore, why is Alice agreeable to poison in a dram but not a poisoned painting or crucifix? Material rhetoric offers a difference between “objects” and “things.” Objects are considered stable “matters of fact,” that are concrete and already accepted by the individual (“Why Has Critique” 227). However, things are considered unstable “matters of concern,” that are intangible and difficult to accept (“Why Has Critique” 231). The painting and crucifix have a thing-like quality as Alice is unable to understand how they work, has not heard of such items before, and views them as unknown entities filled with uncertainty. She knows, however, what a dram of poison is and how to properly use it without injuring herself; she knows how to employ this object as well as the equally important bowl, spoon, and porridge that make up that murder plot. Thus, Alice feels far more dread, anxiety, and concern over the poisoned painting and crucifix due to their unstable position as things (and potentially their connection to religiosity, magic, or witchcraft, which is also thing-like and unknown). She is affected more so by this instability. Clarke the painter, on the other hand, views them as objects because he feels comfortable navigating those material entities; he is no longer filled with fear from being in their presence. Overtime, Clarke has likely become attuned to the poisonous objects and therefore becomes less vulnerable and negatively affected by them. However, as she gets more and more desperate to murder her husband, Alice eventually becomes amicable to the poisoned crucifix as an absolute last resort. Her desire to kill her husband—and be able to marry Mosby—now outweighs the

affective qualities of the dangerous object, as she states, “Then this [poisoned crucifix], I hope, if all the rest do fail, / Will catch Master Arden, / And make him wise in death that lived a fool” (10.84-86). Also interesting, in Scene 10, Clarke shows the crucifix to Alice as the stage directions state, “Then he shows the poisoned crucifix” (10.83). In Scene 1, though, Clarke explains that if a person looks upon the crucifix, they will die from the poison. This disconnect could suggest that two different playwrights worked on these scenes. In Scene 10, Clarke now describes that “they very touch is death,” for the crucifix (10.83). For material rhetoric, the affective nature (and agency) of the crucifix changes substantially if you can be poisoned by looking at the object or if you can be poisoned by touching the object. This change in the qualities of the crucifix might also explain why Alice is now open to using this murder device in later scenes.

Furthermore, poison might be highly affective to audiences and characters due to its multiple connections in early modern thought. In early modern culture, people were preoccupied with poison and the idea of being poisoned (Stymeist 30). Since there was already cultural anxiety surrounding poison, early modern drama often utilized it in their plots, even further increasing cultural anxieties (Stymeist 33). Poison was also seen as particularly treacherous since there was a stereotype that women were more likely to use poison for domestic violence than men (even though incidents of wives murdering their husbands were rare) (Stymeist 42). Poison could also be used to empower weak individuals that might not be able to murder people with traditional means (Stymeist 40). *Arden of Faversham* therefore plays into cultural fears about women murdering their husbands with poison. Since women using poison was connected to “sexual desire and sin” (Stymeist 44), an early modern audience might

have viewed Alice as extremely offensive and inappropriate due to the poison coupled with her affair. These anxieties could be further increased since poisoning was also connected to witchcraft, as detailed in Reginald Scot's 1584 book, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (Stymeist 39). And the idea of poison could be a reference to Machiavellianism, connecting Alice's character to the evils of Niccolo Machiavelli. In fact, the cultural influence of Machiavelli did impact English drama (Petrina and Arienzo 3). Since Machiavellian influences have been studied in the drama of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare (Petrina and Arienzo 6), those influences could additionally be seen in *Arden of Faversham* with the fascination of poisoning and underhanded activity. Poisoning was also especially sinister in the domestic realm since "the domestic poisoner's act of administering toxic substances under the guise of providing wholesome nourishment increased the perceived magnitude of the crime" (Stymeist 35). Therefore, since Alice tried to poison Arden's broth, her crime was seen as especially underhanded, evil, inappropriate, and shocking.

To extend Alice's shocking and erratic behavior surrounding objects, she destroys her Protestant prayerbook, which acts as a crucial non-human actor during an argument with Mosby. More than likely, her prayerbook might have been *The Book of Common Prayer*, a popular Protestant prayerbook (8.116n). In the following, Alice uses the interconnected nature of actions, objects, and words to communicate her message; the use of objects increases her threats:

I will do penance for offending thee
And burn this prayerbook, where I here use
The holy word that had converted me.
See, Mosby, I will tear away the leaves,

And all the leaves, and in this golden cover
Shall they sweet phrases and thy letters dwell,
And thereon will I chiefly meditate
And hold no other sect but such devotion (8.115-122).

On one hand, since a prayerbook represents “the archetypal good Protestant woman,” and symbolizes female piety, an adulteress relieving herself of an object meant for pious women might be a positive in early modern thought (Adams 238; “Domestication” 377). However, the destruction of a prayerbook could be viewed as highly offensive to Protestants who elevated prayerbooks to relic- and idol-like status. Also, since Alice states that she’ll “hold no other sect but such devotion,” to Mosby, she is treating Mosby like an object that she is worshiping or idolizing (8.122). The concept of Mosby being an object inverts the more typical early modern idea that women are viewed as objects or property. Bringing idolatry into the conversation with her Protestant prayerbook also connects back to Catholicism, too. Overall, this scene is religiously complex, as is the affect:

ALICE: Threatens to destroy Protestant prayerbook

PRAYERBOOK: Acts to manipulate and sway Mosby. The prayerbook adds tangible and physical weight to Alice’s words. Mosby is affected to forgive Alice by the combination of actions, words, and objects, as well as the cultural significance of the prayerbook.

MOSBY: I will forget this quarrel, gentle Alice (8.148).

The prayerbook is therefore crucial to this scene, as the exchange wouldn’t have made as much sense without it. Without the prayerbook changing the rhetorical situation and affect, Mosby might not have forgiven Alice.

Furthermore, in terms of material items, there are few objects that humans assign more meaning to than money, especially since “objects are more than featureless repositories of consequential responses” (Marback 53). Even though currency or gold cannot provide food, shelter, or clothing in and of itself, it can be exchanged for such due to the arbitrary meaning that humans assign to it. The arbitrary nature of money is also extraordinarily relevant to early modern culture, as The Great Debasement of coins from precious metals to base metals occurred between 1544 to 1551 in England (Deng 88). At this time, currency moved from having value as a precious metal to “only having value because the state says it does” (Deng 14). Yet, precious metals also only have value because humans assigned value to it; there is nothing inherently more valuable about gold than slate for survival, but scarcity and supply/demand lead people to deem it precious. A debased coin is of equal importance in the material world to a 92.5% sterling coin. Yet due to the intentions, thoughts, and feelings that people bring to money as well as the complicated interactions between humans and objects, a debased coin could be less affective. Since *Arden of Faversham* was written in the late 1580s, The Great Debasement had already occurred. Though, since the real-life events of the play happened in 1551, within the story there could still be coins that were not debased. Either way, the thoughts about the coins as precious metals remain, as Alice, Black Will, Michael, Mosby, and Shakebag all refer to currency as “gold.”

Regardless of debasement, humans are highly affected by money. Money is an object that can help you obtain pretty much any other object, making it unique. Though money is fundamentally trading a material object for another material object, usually, humans view paying for something with money as different than bartering. From a

material perspective, using money is bartering, though. Regardless, humans view money as a sense of security precisely because it can buy—or be bartered—for other goods and services. This meaning and sense of security is only what we project and bring to the currency, though, and not inherent in the currency itself. The object of money can also motivate a variety of intense reactions, being a non-human rhetorical actor along with other objects. For example, when Greene tells Black Will and Shakebag that “I’ll give you twenty angels for your pains,” of murdering Arden, Black Will exclaims, “How? Twenty angels? Give my fellow George Shakebag and me twenty angels, and if thou’lt have thy own father slain that thou mayest inherit his land we’ll kill him” (2.88-92). Shakebag, who is also deeply affected by the allure of the money-object states, “Ay, thy mother, thy sister, thy brother, or all thy kin,” further detailing the power it holds over them (2.93-94). The mentioned exchange could be described with the following:

GREENE: I’ll give you twenty angels for your pains.

MONEY/COINS: The promise of material money/coins is an extreme motivator for Black Will and Shakebag. They are drawn to this material object as well as the promise of all the other material objects that can be purchased with money. Money offers stability and choice. They are willing to do anything for the promise of money. Also, the assassins’ lower-class status makes the money even more affective to them.

BLACK WILL: How? Twenty angels? Give my fellow George Shakebag and me twenty angels, and if thou’lt have thy own father slain that thou mayest inherit his land we’ll kill him.

SHAKEBAG: Ay, thy mother, thy sister, thy brother, or all thy kin,” further detailing the power it holds over them (2.88-94).

Without the non-human actor of the money/coins, Black Will and Shakebag would not have agreed to murder Arden. The material object acts as an extreme motivator and persuades the assassins to participate when they otherwise would not. Each murderer gains something from their participation, whether that is money, a lover, or the promise of land, showing a mix of human and non-human motivators (all of which are equally important to the plot). Also, currency represents an object that most people can never have enough of. To this point, Black Will states, “When I think on the forty angels I must / have more;” the idea of getting money stirs up thoughts on how to get even more money (3.49-50). Humans covet money. This would ultimately go back to the meanings and intentions humans bring to objects; the money is only valuable because society (and Black Will and Shakebag in this example) view it as having value. Additionally, both Black Will and Shakebag are extremely vulnerable to money due to their lower-class status. Their reaction to twenty or forty gold coins is very different than how Arden himself would react, as he is an upper-middling gentleman. The money acts as a crucial non-human actor since it motivates the murderers’ participation.

Additionally, as is fitting for a “strikingly material play,” Arden’s murder scene is filled with a wealth of non-human actors that facilitate and contribute to the murder (Richardson 104). In fact, Black Will succinctly lays out the successful, final plot as well as many of the material entities used:

Mark my device:

Place Mosby, being a stranger, in **a chair**,

And let your husband sit upon **a stool**,

That I may come behind him cunningly
And with **a towel** pull him to the ground,
Then stab him till his flesh be as a sieve.
That done, bear him behind **the Abbey**,
That those that find him murdered may suppose
Some slave or other killed him for his **gold** (14.119-129).

In the “setting of the stage” for this murder, **all** the non-human actors are equally important to the mission’s success, whether they be the **knife** itself that is used to stab Arden or the **wooden stool** that he’s originally sitting upon. These objects are just as crucial as the human murders, too, as the crime couldn’t have been successful without all rhetorical actors—human and non-human. The room itself even contributes to the affective power, as the murder takes place in the parlor. Typically, the parlor is where close and intimate relations spend quality time together; these expectations are bastardized and inverted when this room for deep relationships is transformed into a sinister murder plot (*Domestic Life* 121). Also, when the murder is carried out, more material entities are involved than stated in Black Will’s plot! Arden and Mosby are seated at a **table**, surrounded by **other stools**, in which they are playing a **dice** game for a **French Crown** (14.224-229). Since Mosby produces the dice, they might be the very same kissing dice that Alice gave him in Scene I, adding irony to the moment as Arden uses these dice right before Mosby is about to help murder him. Furthermore, the fact that Mosby sits in Arden’s **chair** and Arden on a **stool** inverts their power dynamics, as typically the man of the house would sit in the chair (*Domestic Life* 125). This could act as a foreshadowing device or another way that objects can inform interactions. To carry out the murder, Black Will pulls Arden to the ground with **a towel**, Mosby hits him with **a pressing iron** (connecting back to Scene I when Arden made fun of Mosby having a

pressing iron), Shakebag stabs him with a **knife**, and Alice stabs him with a **second knife** (14.236-243). Therefore, there are at minimal nine different objects that directly contribute to Arden's murder, to say nothing of all the affective objects present in the home at the time, which also affect the ambient environment, even if they are not being actively utilized. Finally, the idea that the Mayor and/or guards would assume Arden was murdered for his **gold** also speaks again to the material pull of currency to humans.

Then, if human entities are different from the material, does Arden's body become a material object once the human spark of life is drained from it? In the remainder of the play, both Arden's body and Arden's blood become extremely affective non-human actors, causing great turmoil to the remaining cast of characters. The fact that Arden's body becomes part of the "chain of custody," for evidence also implies that the body is now a material object (Dudgeon 107). Furthermore, according to embodied rhetoric, the human body can be a physical object (McCann 11). For Alice, her husband's blood becomes a physical representation of her guilt around murdering him, having an affair, and being an undedicated wife, as she projects those current emotional struggles onto the blood pooling on the floor. Additionally, in early modern thought and providential narratives, a corpse might bleed in the presence of the murderer to accuse them, further connecting the blood and Alice's feelings of guilt (Dudgeon 109). The physical blood even seems to affect her so deeply that she begins to detach from reality and go into a frenzy, stating, "But with my nails I'll scape away the blood. / The more I strive the more the blood appears!" (14.260-261). The blood erodes Alice's conscience. Her despair at the presence of the blood increases, until she

says, “My husband’s death torments me at the heart” (14.273). Using my methodology, the blood might affect the rhetorical situation as follows:

SUSAN: The blood cleaveth to the ground and will not out.

BLOOD: Emotionally impacts and affects Alice as it’s a physical representation of her husband’s death and her participation as a murderer.

ALICE: But with my nails I’ll scape away the blood. / The more I strive the more the blood appears!

BLOOD: The sight of the blood continues to make Alice more anxious and upset.

SUSAN: What’s the reason, Mistress, can you tell?

ALICE: Because I blush not at my husband’s death (14.259-264).

BLOOD: The blood is not only a physical representation of Arden’s death, but is evidence of the murder itself, causing more anxiety. Alice also begins to feel bad that she doesn’t feel guilty—or blush—at her husband’s death.

Additionally, the blood has an agentic quality almost like the poisoned objects in the play. Even though Susan and Alice desperately try to clean up the blood, the blood refuses to be cleaned, making it a non-human actor with unusual agency in this scene. The blood could also be connected to the four humors in early modern thought, where blood was associated with a sanguine personality that was enthusiastic and active; without this blood, Arden is lifeless, and all of Alice’s will to live evaporates at the sight of this spilled blood.

Finally, while the material world made the murder plot as well as the entire play of *Arden of Faversham* possible, the material world also exposes the murderers to the

Mayor and guards of Faversham, connecting back to the material importance of evidence. Could the non-human actors that reveal the murder be considered material witnesses? Possibly. Both material evidence and the characters' dialogue are crucial to revealing the murder plot in *Arden of Faversham*, showing the connection of words and objects (Dudgeon 100). For examples of damning material evidence, the snow, which greatly adds to the ambience of the night, abruptly stops after Arden's body is dragged into the fields behind the Abbey, showing a distinct trail of footprints between the body and the Ardens' house (14.361-364). Michael then neglects to properly dispose of some of the murder weapons—the bloody towel and knife—which end up incriminating the murderers (14.391-392). He was so profoundly affected by the blood and body that he states, "I was so afraid I knew not what I did," once again showing the impact of the non-human actors (14.391). Lastly, the Mayor finds blood in the Ardens' house, the last piece of incriminating material evidence, which Alice attempts to pass off as "pig's blood we had to supper," and, "a cup of wine that Michael shed," to no avail, as the Mayor is already convinced that the blood is Arden's (14.393; 14.407). The narrative that the non-human actors tell is very compelling, and "provide[s] enough traces to enable the truth to be discovered," eventually foiling the murders (*Domestic Life* 125). Therefore, material objects were just as instrumental in revealing the murderers as committing the murder.

As for Arden's corpse as a material entity, the corpse continued to affect the denizens of Faversham and their ambient environment around the Abbey for years to come, as an imprint of Arden's body was visible in the grass for over two years after the murder, creating a reminder for all through this physical manifestation (Epilogue 10-

13). The lasting imprint of Arden's body might also connect to religion, specifically Catholicism, as it is reminiscent of "a hagiographic account" (Adams 247). In fact, the "very strange and notable" imprint of Arden's body is also present within Raphael Holinshed's real-life account of the murder, *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, showing that this kind of phenomena would be believable and normal to an early modern audience (Holinshed 1066). Since Arden was cursed by Reede for his greedy behavior, that could be seen as a logical justification for this unusual material effect that continues to affect and inform any interactions surrounding the Abbey for years (13.53). In the Ambient Rhetoric section, I will further discuss how the imprint affected the town of Faversham, showing an overlap between if objects are material or ambient—or both.

Ultimately, the material corpse possesses extreme rhetorical agency as a non-human actor. First, the corpse affected Alice, Susan, Franklin, the Mayor, and many other citizens of Faversham. The corpse is an interesting material object because most of its affective power comes from the fact that it was a human actor that is now a non-human actor; the missing spark of life and its now lack of animation makes it extremely distressing to anyone that views it. The stillness is imposing. Additionally, the corpse seems to be a material possession of the deceased person, as the stage directions refer to the corpse as "Arden's body" or "his body," showing possession. This begs the question if a corpse is a possession of the deceased person or if the deceased person has now become a physical object—or both. Either way, the transformation of Arden into a material object through death originally gave the murderers satisfaction and joy; however, the physical corpse eventually invokes grief, guilt, outrage, and despair for the

town. If human actors and non-human actors are equally privileged in material rhetoric and ANT, that means that Arden's dialogue and persuasion as a human actor are just as salient as the corpse's suasion and affect. Furthermore, the corpse leaving an imprint on the ground for two years shows agency akin to the poisonous objects in the play. Just as Arden's body is now an object void of life, the imprint represents another lack: the lack or void of the physical body. Since the imprint is the lack of a physical object, it is perhaps another feature that contributes to the ambient environment versus an object itself. Individual material objects contribute to the overall ambience of an environment, as every object or feature within an environment—no matter how pronounced or minimal—can become a non-human actor. In the next section on Ambient Events, the cast of non-human actors in *Arden of Faversham*'s rhetorical situation will again be extended.

[IV. Ambient Events in *Arden of Faversham*]

Entire ambient environments affect characters in *Arden of Faversham*, not just singular material objects. Of course, material objects can contribute to ambient environments, as can sound, weather, temperature, and any other multisensory element. Though place can be a factor to ambience (and *Arden of Faversham* revolves around Kent), ambient rhetoric moves a step further than place-based rhetoric. Rickert explains that ambient rhetoric “integrates the world itself as a necessary part of rhetorical work, making rhetorical theory as much about the world around us as it is about human beings,” which adds entire environments into the rhetorical situation (21). A fine line also exists between material objects and ambient environments, so there will be some overlap between this ambient event section and the previous material event section. For example, when someone sits around a fireplace, are they sitting around the material object of a fireplace or an ambient environment? Is the dining room table, source of such comradery and socializing in early modern culture, considered an object or a place/environment? Tuan adds that place can be a town, a home, a fireplace within the home, which not only contributes to ambience but connects to the domestic household in the play (152). Material objects can contribute to the environment and can even be environments; regardless, both material objects and ambient environments are non-human actors. With this inevitable overlap in mind, I will detail the affective nature of ambient environments in *Arden of Faversham* using my methodology of Non-Human Actor Elevation. Ambient environments can also be non-human actors that affect

characters like materials objects. They can also impact, alter, and inform the rhetorical situation as non-human actors in the play.

The docks and boats at Harty Ferry, which runs from Faversham Creek to the Isle of Sheppey, represents one of the most salient ambient environments in *Arden of Faversham* (12.1n). A blinding fog appears around the ferry that characters describe as mystical, stifling, and that of hell's mouth (11.6; 11.32; 12.2). Arden, Franklin, the Ferryman, Black Will, and Shakebag all comment on the strange nature of the mist (also referred to as fog or smoke). In addition to the mist, the ferry and docks have the smells and sounds of water, uneven ground, the sounds of horses, and darkness settling around, all contributing to a multisensory environment. Each of these elements work together to create a unique rhetorical situation; without any one element, the situation would be altered (as would the affect the characters experience). First, Arden states that he is, "almost stifled with this fog," and asks to escape the docks (11.32). Just as Arden might be persuaded to leave an environment due to human interactions, he becomes persuaded to leave the docks by the fog. The environment—and therefore even the weather—can have rhetorical potential, making them non-human actors. This interaction might be imagined with the following:

FOG: Suffocates and stifles Arden. The unusual and mystical nature of the dense fog also negatively affects Arden, and makes him want to leave this particular environment.

ARDEN: I am almost stifled with this fog. Come, let's away (11.32).

Furthermore, when the murderers, Black Will and Shakebag, show up at the ferry, they have a similar experience as Arden and Franklin. Black Will first describes the mist as

feeling like he is “almost in hell’s mouth,” transforming the typically serene nature of The Swale (which geographically connects Faversham Creek to the Isle of Sheppey) to the entrance of Hell. This shows the affective power of ambient details. Additionally, the mist continues to negatively affect Black Will and Shakebag by making them extremely disoriented and anxious. They even hear (or imagine to hear) the sound of horses, creating even more anxiety if they missed their murder target once again. The mist and subsequent darkness even results in Shakebag falling into a ditch, another event that would not have happened without this ambience—a non-human actor. For the murderers, this interaction could be imagined with:

SHAKEBAG: O Will, where art thou?

BLACK WILL: Here, Shakebag, almost in hell’s mouth, where I cannot see my way for smoke.

FOG: Black Will and Shakebag are disoriented and confused by the fog. They feel anxious and uneasy, being affected by this unusual weather event.

SHAKEBAG: But sirrah Will, what horses are those that passed?

BLACK WILL: Why, didst thou hear any?

SHAKEBAG: Ay, that I did.

SOUND: The murderers are further disoriented by trying to listen to each other’s voices and the potential ambient sound of horses.

BLACK WILL: Come, let us go on like a couple of blind / pilgrims

FOG AND SOUND: Ambient, multisensory details continue to disorient the pair.

SHAKEBAG: *Shakebag falls into a ditch* (12.1-22).

Therefore, in this scene, had it not been for the non-human actors of the fog and sounds, the murderers would not have become disoriented, and Shakebag would not have fallen into a ditch. Their dialogue to each other also centers around the ambient details, showing how these elements can also impact rhetoric. Finally, Shakebag states, “See how the sun hath cleared the foggy mist. / Now we have missed the mark of our intent,” giving the fog/mist agency (12.46-47). Right after Arden was out of their reach, the fog randomly dissipated, making it seem like the fog was intentionally halting the murderers and sparing Arden. To an early modern audience, perhaps this would seem more like a supernatural or divine intervention than a mere coincidence. At any rate, in this example, all the details of the environment matter from the fog to the sounds to even the water and the boat. Each are crucial to this exact situation, making them important non-human actors.

Additionally, Rainham Down is another affective ambient environment in *Arden of Faversham*. In the sixteenth century, Rainham Down was a rural environment with open countryside, which created worry that a person might be robbed while traveling; Rainham Down especially had a reputation for robberies and crime (7.18n). To continue with the play’s intense geographical engagement, the Down was “halfway between Gravesend and Faversham, on the London road” (7.18n). Black Will describes this place with, “you may front him [Arden] well on Rainham Down, / A place well fitting such a stratagem,” stating that he is also aware of the vulnerable nature of someone traveling on this stretch of road (7.18-19). When Arden and Franklin are traveling on the road alone, Franklin seems to be particularly affected by the area’s dangerous

reputation and unprotected openness, a phenomenon that might not have occurred elsewhere:

ARDEN: Come, Master Franklin, onward with your tale.

RAINHAM DOWN: Affects Franklin negatively due to the dangerous reputation, to the point that Franklin feels flustered when telling his story.

FRANKLIN: I assure you, sir, you task me much. / A heavy blood is gathered at my heart, / And on the sudden in my wind so short / As hindereth the passage of my speech. / So fierce a qualm yet ne'er assailed me (9.62-67).

Therefore, many elements contribute to Franklin's unease with this ambient environment. He is affected by the area's reputation, by the sprawling open conditions and lack of population that make help unlikely, and by an "annoyance of dust," that Arden mentions (9.69). The fear Franklin feels is not just about place, but the complex interaction of humans, objects, and places—or all the human and non-human actors. Franklin did not feel this same anxiety in London, showing the power of ambient environments to alter rhetorical situations and communication.

However, ambient environments don't have to be sprawling, outside locations such as Rainham Down or Harty Ferry to be affective; they can also be within domestic homes. For example, during one of the murder plots, Michael becomes so terrified at an unlocked door that it transforms Franklin's London home into a dreadful, fearful environment for Michael (4.90-94). A locked door, which represents sealing off a private space from external assault, makes the ambient environment soothing and safe to Michael, whereas the unlocked door deeply affects him to the point of having a waking nightmare about being murdered (4.92-93; *Domestic Life* 120). Also, in early

modern thought, locked doors could also be a sign that people are up to no good, which complicates the material lock itself (Ingram 96). Michael must lock the door to keep out the murders, but locking a door could be seen as a sign of nefarious action, complicating the role of this non-human actor since it produces contradictory affects. He wants to unlock the door to help the murderers (so that he can marry Susan), but he's also scared of the murderers and cares for Arden; he wants personal gains from the murder, but he doesn't want Arden to die. For Michael, this situation is therefore complicated by his turmoil over whether to help the murderers by unlocking the door or protect Arden by locking the door. The unlocked door and resulting negative ambient environment eventually traumatizes Michael so much that he screams out, as detailed by the following:

DOOR: *Remains unlocked.*

UNLOCKED DOOR: The uncertainty and lack of security of the unlocked door makes the entire house feel dangerous and fearful to Michael, deeply affecting him.

MICHAEL: Ah, Master Franklin, help! / Call up the neighbors or we are but dead!

ARDEN: What, are the doors fast locked, and all things safe?

MICHAEL: I cannot tell; I think I locked the doors.

UNLOCKED DOOR: The idea of an unlocked door also makes Arden feel uneasy and that the space he is in is unsafe.

ARDEN: I like not this, but I'll go see myself (4.85-100).

Additionally, while Arden, Franklin, and (eventually) Michael view the lock positively once the door is locked (as something that will keep themselves and their environment safe), Black Will and Shakebag view the lock as a source of deception. Shakebag states, “this is the door [*He tries it*]—but soft, methinks ‘tis shut. / The villain Michael hath deceived us” (5.34-35). This again details how different individuals can bring varying thoughts, feelings, and intentions to the material and ambient world. While Michael’s ambient environment feels safer from the locked door, the murderers feel that they have been excluded from the London house and deceived, affecting them negatively. Finally, the locked door also is the central element to the plot in both Scene IV and Scene V, as the majority of the action and dialogue revolve around the door itself, making the material an integral part of the play; the door is just as involved in the interactions as a non-human actor as the human actors. Interestingly, when Arden is finally murdered, Michael locks the street door to the house so that Arden cannot escape (14.202). At Franklin’s London house, the locked door kept Arden safe from the dangerous murderers outside. Now, the locked door keeps Arden trapped inside with the murderers.

Furthermore, ambient environments do not have to be salacious, shocking, or dangerous to affect characters; even the everyday objects and environments of the domestic household can sway and affect human actors. Since *Arden of Faversham* is a domestic tragedy, the domestic household plays a huge role in the plot and characters’ lives. The Arden’s house features a kitchen, chamber, parlor, hall, a counting house, and courtyard, making it a spacious house for the time (Hamling and Richardson 23, 181). The house stands today at 80 Abbey Street in Faversham, Kent, next to Faversham

Abbey, giving even modern readers a physical and geographical connection to the play. The house used to be the guest house for the Abbey, which could contribute to its ambient features, especially since Arden's house is larger than average due to being an old monastery (Hamling and Richardson 116, 178). The Arden's household also possesses extreme ambience from the daily sounds of cleaning and bustling by servants and Alice, Arden attending to his work tasks from the house (as during this period there was an overlap between home and business), the furniture and decorations of the home, the sounds and smells of cooking (even the poisonous broth), and any conversations within the home. Due to the thin walls of early modern England, the smells and sounds of cooking and cleaning could likely be perceived throughout the entire house, creating more ambience (*Domestic Life* 2). All of these seemingly small details interweave together to create an ambient environment. Even the furniture of the Arden's space would be imposing, as wooden furniture during this period for the upper-middling class would have been large and sturdy (Richardson 11). In fact, wooden furniture was so well made during this time that it could last upwards of a century; some tables in parlors were even unmovable (Hamling and Richardson 11). The parlor table, chair, and stools are the source of much action in the play, such as when Arden eats the poisoned broth, the table games with Mosby, and the final murder plot. Tuan even suggests that the dinner table is not an object, but a place, as it is a source of socialization and destination for family dinners as well as events with guests (153). He continues that, "dining becomes a secular ritual at which family and friends share food and wine under the glow of candlelight," connecting even further to the idea of ambience with the atmosphere of food, drink, and candlelight (Tuan 153). The parlor also provides a

relatively public space (compared to the privacy of someone's chamber) that is shared with all members of the household, servants, and guests. Additionally, due to the material boom in the sixteenth century as well as the Arden's privileged status, their parlor would have been full of bulky furniture (*Domestic Life* 123). Even a barren room versus a full room would impact the ambience. So, overall, the relaxing and shared space of the parlor would likely be soothing to Arden. Each of the household objects, spaces, and structure itself affects Arden positively into being comfortable within his home. They affect him because they are all necessary non-human actors. Tuan even describes the home as a nurturing shelter where people can "openly and comfortably admit our frailty and our bodily needs" (154). Home is familiar and safe.

However, the relaxing ambience is completely subverted when Arden is murdered in his own parlor, which would be a supreme violation of trust and hospitality (to say nothing about a woman murdering her husband and a servant murdering their employer during the early modern period). Arden's safe home and intimate parlor space transformed into something akin to Rainham Down, a place for violent crime (*Domestic Life* 121). Hamling and Richardson even describe that the murderers transformed Arden's parlor from "a secure space to one of vulnerability for the householder," connecting to the idea that human actors are vulnerable to the material world (179). The furniture that was once familiar and relaxing now prevents Arden from escaping, as the room was so crowded that Black Will has to creep between Michael's legs to move within the room (14.233). Michael also locked the street door, which further closes in the environment and locked Arden into the dangerous space (14.202). Arden is distracted by friendly games at the table so that he's kept occupied and doesn't suspect

the murder plot (14.227). All these non-human actors that typically contribute to positive ambience and affect now become devices in the murder. Then there becomes a juxtaposition of ambience as Arden is murdered within his home while the Saint Valentine's Fair is happening by Faversham Abbey, which is directly near his house (14.44n). Faversham was famous for this particular fair, another connection to the real-life geographical and historical setting of the play (*Domestic Life* 106). Therefore, each element of the environment makes the murder plot possible, just as the long list of objects made the murder possible in the Material Events section—all are non-human actors in the play. Also, none of the murder plots worked throughout the entire play minus the one that was situated in Arden's own home with his own belongings. The murder didn't require any grand devices or supernatural, poisonous objects, but just average objects within the domestic home, creating a connection with the genre of domestic tragedy. Does the murder finally work out because Arden is off guard and relaxed in his home, a place that would be very unexpected for danger? Overall, no object or environment is therefore "boring" or "unimportant" to the play; each are rhetorical non-human actors that impact *Arden of Faversham* from a table to a poisoned crucifix to a towel to the fog. Then, once Arden is murdered, his corpse and blood radically transforms the ambience of the household, too, as detailed in the Material Events section.

In addition to the blood, the imprint from Arden's corpse behind Faversham Abbey drastically changes the ambience of the entire area for years to come. The print in the grass acts as a physical, visual reminder of the murder. Franklin's epilogue describes this phenomenon with:

Arden lay murdered in that plot of ground
Which he by force and violence held from Reede.
And in the grass his body's print was seen
Two years and more after the deed was done (Epil.10-13).

This print, which consisted of a body outline where no grass would grow, had quite the draw (Holinshed 1066). According to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, people traveled from near and far to see the imprint of Arden's corpse. The idea of people traveling seems to connect to religious pilgrimages, with further religious connotations since the print was on the Abbey grounds. The ambient environment surrounding the Abbey was therefore transformed during this time; what used to be a serene Abbey was now a tourist attraction and potential pilgrimage spot due to one physical feature. The imprint of Arden's corpse therefore shows how one feature within an ambient environment can impact the entire environment (just as how Arden's blood transformed the affect of the house). In fact, Faversham Abbey is not just any abbey, but considered "one of the largest and most important monastic houses within a day's travel of London, and twelfth-century burial place of King Stephen and Queen Matilda, "which is another solid connection to the actual landscape of Kent ("Introduction" 19). This solid, historical place also informs the environment surrounding most of *Arden of Faversham*. The rhetorical situation surrounding the Arden's household, Arden's murder, the attempted cover up, and even Alice's affair are all within the shadow of one of the most important monastic sites in the area. Since all aspects of an environment can be rhetorical, this certainly affects characters, even subliminally. Therefore, since the imprint is located on the Abbey grounds and is treated almost like a site for religious pilgrimage, an early modern audience would likely view the imprint as a religious

happening. Furthermore, Dudgeon explains that the lasting imprint could be a sign of Arden's status in Faversham as his image persists even after death (113). Instead of just a reminder of Arden's status, the imprint could also signify the unjustness of Arden keeping the land from Reede, as the epilogue states he held it through "force and violence" (Epil.11). The imprint could be a reminder to the upper-middling sort about the ramifications for mistreating the less fortunate, as Arden was viciously murdered. If this was the case, the imprint could affect the lower-class people positively, as they would see the print as validation and vindication for their struggles against higher classes. The more affluent would be affected negatively by this ambient environment due to the imprint's commentary on maintaining and withholding their wealth and land. Overall, all these affective qualities continue to be complicated by the religious connotations of the Abbey and the supernatural, making this environment rich with many affective elements that function as non-human actors (to say nothing about the other sights, sounds, and multisensory stimuli around the Abbey).

Finally, the geographical situatedness of *Arden of Faversham* impacts the entire ambience of the play, too. At every level, the play is involved with different areas of Kent and Faversham. Appendix B lists all the places within the play, whether a geographical location (Faversham) or a more specific, smaller place (Franklin's London house). Additionally, Appendix D details the place that each scene was set in, to show the movement throughout Kent within *Arden of Faversham*. Richardson even describes that some qualities of the characters' personalities, temperament, and dialogue are Kentish (*Domestic Life* 107). Kent is even a county famous for travel, which also connects to the characters traveling back and forth from London ("Scene of a Murder"

2). Place is extremely affective. If the play was set somewhere else (or even in a fictional setting), most aspects would be radically different, just as the affect would be radically different with varied ambient environments or material objects. The objects matter; the ambient elements matter; the place matters. Each element artfully constructs *Arden of Faversham* into this particular play. Therefore, when discussing the difference between material events or ambient events, there is still a lot of overlap. Material objects contribute to ambient environments, such as Arden's body negatively impacting the ambience of the Arden's house. And, place affects the characters, context, and rhetorical situation, too, broadening the definition of non-human actors.

[V. Conclusion]

When considering the play's connection to true crime, the poisoned painting, poisoned crucifix, and Alice's prayerbook are the only places within *Arden of Faversham* where the material world differs from the historical account of Arden's murder in Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. None of these objects are present in the primary source material, with the closest reference being that Alice and Mosby did purchase poison from a painter to murder Arden. These added objects would also have religious connotations, connecting both to Catholicism (painting and crucifix) and Protestantism (prayerbook). The religious connection would affect, outrage, and/or entertain an audience, especially since the objects can emphasize the "quasi-Catholic tendencies within Protestant England," during the late sixteenth century (Adams 232, 247). This could also inform Alice's fear of the poisoned objects, which could be viewed as powerful religious idols, icons, or the supernatural (Adams 232). The playwright, aware of the power of religion and anxiety of poison on an early modern audience, might have added these objects for that specific reason: because they were emotionally salient and profoundly affective. And, since playwrights who write about real crime "typically try to make their plays as true to actual events as possible," any deviation is even more intentional and important to consider (Hopkins and Leggott 86). Therefore, *Arden of Faversham's* anonymous playwright was using principles of material rhetoric—even if they weren't consciously aware of these theories—to include religious and poisoned objects that were likely to sway and deeply impact the theatre's audience through the material. The playwright tried to select objects that would be

particularly affective to the characters (and an early modern audience). Material rhetoric drips throughout *Arden of Faversham*, from the text itself, to the impact on the characters and audience, to even the playwright.

Overall, *Arden of Faversham* is an early modern play that offers a sustained investment in the material and ambient world. The intriguing material and ambient world are so crucial that they become non-human actors themselves. If we don't take these non-human actors seriously, we are blind to a major aspect of the rhetorical situation, as all interactions are valuable regardless of the type of rhetorical actor—human or non-human. This focus on material objects and possessions throughout the play connects to the fact that goods and material life/culture exploded between the 1560s to approximately 1600 (*Domestic Life* 66). Since *Arden of Faversham* is based on a true account that included most of the objects detailed in the play, the material world is not just a product of the playwright's imagination or affinity towards objects, but a reflection of the embedded life that we as humans lead with the material world. Rhetoric is fluid, and the changing cultural landscape of an increased prevalence of objects created more opportunities for material and ambient rhetoric in the early modern period, though humans have always interacted with non-human entities long before this material boom. *Arden of Faversham* boasts an expensive cast of non-human actors that alter, affect, inform, contextualize, suade, and persuade the human actors within the play, the audience, and the entire rhetorical situation. Without these interactions, part of the communicative and rhetorical picture of the play would be ignored and abandoned. Without considering the material, any analysis would be incomplete. Material objects and ambient environments are therefore crucial to understanding *Arden of Faversham*;

the play cannot be separated from the material, nor can our analysis. Finally, Non-Human Actor Elevation should not stop with *Arden of Faversham*. My methodology could be applied to any early modern play, any play, any piece of literature, or even real life. Once visible, our entanglements with the material cannot be unseen.

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APPENDICES

[Appendix A: Material Objects in *Arden of Faversham*]

[Appendix A: Material Objects in *Arden of Faversham*]

Below is a list of every object featured or referenced in *Arden of Faversham*.

While my analysis considered many objects, future study could analyze *all* the objects within the play, big or small. Studying the clothing and accessories worn by the characters could also deepen an analysis of the play. Clothes can be incredibly affective and revealing, making them important non-human actors. Some objects could also be analyzed from an ambient rhetoric perspective opposed to just material rhetoric; for example, the crucifix includes multisensory elements such as smell, and the dice also make sounds when rolled. This list could help in targeting future objects of study.

A boat	A knife (used to murder Arden)
A bowl	A leaf
A bucket	A mace
A cannon-bullet	A pail of water
A chair	A pile of wood
A chest	A pressing iron
A cloth	A quart pot
A cowl-staff	A shop stall with window
A cup	A silken gown
A cup of beer	A spoon
A door with a lock	A table
A gallon of sack	A towel
A glove	An oyster boat
A handkerchief	Alice's bed
A hoy	Alice's prayerbook with a golden cover
A key	Alice's wedding ring

Angels (currency)	Letter from Greene to Alice
Arden's bed	Letter from Michael to Susan
Arden's blood	Letter Patents from the Duke of
Arden's corpse	Somerset to Arden
Arden's girdle	Livery cloak
Arden's imprint	Love letters between Alice and Mosby
Arden's purse/pouch	Michael's purse
Arden's sword	Mist or fog
Bags of gold	Money in a purse
Black Will's buckler	Mosby's blood
Black Will's dagger	Mosby's silken gown
Black Will's sword	Mosby's sword
Bodkin	Oil paints
Box of mithridate	Painted cloth
Broth	Painting of a dagger sticking in a heart
Chancery seal	Pencils
Counting-house door	Petticoats
Crowns (currency)	Plaunchers
Deeds to the Abbey of Faversham	Poison (powder)
Drinking bowl	Poisoned crucifix
Dust	Poisoned oil
Favors (love tokens)	Poisoned painting
Footprints in the snow	Poisoned pictures
Franklin's napkin with gold knit	Pounds (currency)
Grass	Pressing iron
Gold	Ratsbane
Gold plate	Rhubarb leaves
Gunpowder	Rushes
Gun bullets	Saddles
Keys to Franklin's London house	Satin doublet
Keys to the Arden's house	Shakebag's dagger

Shakebag's pistol
Shakebag's sword
Shillings
Shop signs
Silver dice (a pair)
Snow
Spanish needle
Spectacles
Stockings
Stools
Tables (boards for chess and
backgammon)

The Ardens' back door
The Ardens' front door
The Ardens' floor
The guards' bills
The guards' glaives
Velvet hose (threadbare)
Venom
Warrants
Watchet satin doublet (torn)
Water
Wine

[Appendix B: Places in *Arden of Faversham*]

[Appendix B: Places in *Arden of Faversham*]

Below is a list of every place featured or referenced in *Arden of Faversham*. As with the objects, further analysis could be done on each place. Many of the below places have historical and/or geographical significance that could be explored in terms of ambient rhetoric or place-based rhetoric.

A countinghouse	Counting house
A ditch	England
A field	Greene's land
A hill	Greenwich
A house on Aldersgate Street	Farm of Broughton
A wall	Faversham
A well	Faversham Abbey
Abbey Hall	Fleur-De-Lis (a Faversham inn)
Abbey lands	Flushing
Aldersgate Street	Franklin's bed
Alehouse; tenpenny alehouse	Franklin's chamber
Alice's chamber	Franklin's London house
Alice's closet	Gadshill
Arden's chamber	Harty Ferry
Arden's study	Lands of the Abbey of Faversham
Behind Faversham Abbey	Saint Paul's Cathedral
Billingsgate	Saint Paul's yard
Boulogne	Saint Valentine's Fair
Bradshaw's shop	Scotland
Broom close	Isle of Sheppey
Canterbury	Kent
Clarke's house	London

Lord Cheyne's house	The Ardens' house
Newgate	The Blackfriars
Ospringe	The coast of Kent
Outside the Arden's house	The Counter
Rainham Down	The gallows
Reede's land	The inner court of Franklin's London house
Rochester	The Nag's Head (tavern in London, close to Saint Paul's Cathedral)
Rome	The Quay
Salutation (a tavern in Billingsgate)	The Red Lion (inn in Sittingbourne)
Shurland	The sea
Sittingbourne	The stairs of Franklin's London house
Smithfield	The street near Franklin's London house
Southwark	Wales
Thames Street	
The Ardens' door	
The Ardens' field	
The Ardens' garden	

[Appendix C: Material Objects in Stage Directions in *Arden of Faversham*]

[Appendix C: Material Objects in Stage Directions of *Arden of Faversham*]

Below is a list of all the objects—or props—listed in *Arden of Faversham*'s stage directions. For future research, myself or another scholar could analyze how objects impacted the play in performance. This could be accomplished by analyzing the objects from the stage directions as well as known information about staging and performance during this period. Sadly, little is known about *Arden of Faversham*'s specific staging. An analysis of performance could reveal another dimension of material rhetoric and ambience: how the material impacts an audience, too. Instead of just a material object in a text, there would be a material object from a text that would be brought to the stage that would be viewed by an audience. Not only would the ambience from the play matter, but also the ambience of the theatre itself. Audience members would have a different experience if they saw the play during the day or night, rain or shine, at a different playhouse, with different audience members, with different actors, with different props, or any different ambient noises. Such an analysis would be somewhat speculative given our lack of information on *Arden of Faversham*'s performance during the time, but it would deepen the realms of these material factors.

A bandage

A bowl of broth

A chair

A coin

A cup of beer

A cup of wine

A ditch

A letter from Greene to Alice

A letter from Michael to Susan

A pail of water

A towel

A vial of poison

Alice's prayerbook

Alice's purse of money

Arden's body	Poisoned crucifix (uncovered)
Arden's sword	Prentice's window
Black Will's pistol	Shakebag's pistol
Black Will's sword	Shakebag's sword
Counting house	Stools
Deeds	Table
Dice	The doors at the Ardens' house
Franklin's sword	The doors at Franklin's London house (locked)
Keys to the Arden's house	The doors at Franklin's London house (unlocked)
Game tables	
Money in a purse	
Mosby's sword	
Poisoned crucifix (covered)	

[Appendix D: Place by Scene in *Arden of Faversham*]

[Appendix D: Place by Scene in *Arden of Faversham*]

Below is a list of the setting by scene in *Arden of Faversham*. This list shows the characters' physical movement through Kent during the play, once again detailing the play's sustained engagement with specific place.

Scene 1: Loosely around Arden's Faversham house

Scene 2: The road between Faversham and Rochester, on the way to London

Scene 3: Saint Paul's yard, around Saint Paul's Cathedral

Scene 4: Franklin's London house

Scene 5: The street near Franklin's London house

Scene 6: The street near Franklin's London house

Scene 7: The street near Franklin's London house

Scene 8: Outside the Arden's house; on the Arden's property

Scene 9: The open road; traveling between Rochester, Rainham Down, and Sittingbourne.

Scene 10: Near the Arden's Faversham house

Scene 11: Harty Ferry, near the docks

Scene 12: Harty Ferry, near the docks

Scene 13: On the road back from Shurland to Faversham; the outskirts of Faversham

Scene 14: The Arden's house

Scene 15: Somewhere in London, near the Thames

Scene 16: Outside Faversham Abbey

Scene 17: Near the north coast of Kent

Scene 18: Abbey Hall