

Anxiety over Reprobation:

*The Repentance of Robert Greene and the Doctrine of Election**

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Introduction

The Calvinistic doctrine of election influenced the Church of England and the Elizabethan drama.¹ Robert Greene (1558–1592) employed this doctrine to narrate his own life and death. On his deathbed, he reviewed his prodigal life and wrote *The Repentance of Robert Greene*. This pamphlet can be described as a confessional autobiography and preaches the importance of repentance. In the autobiographical pamphlet, he narrates his own prodigal life by employing the theological concept of election.

With reference to the *ars moriendi*, Lori Humphrey Newcomb explains that postponing repentance until one's deathbed was condemned by Protestants, and she regards Greene's repentance in this pamphlet as a postponed repentance, quoting sentences from Sister Mary Catharine O'Connor.² If their understanding is correct, Greene's repentance is not derived from the Protestant view. But there is an error in their understanding. His repentance should not be regarded as a postponed repentance given his soteriology in this pamphlet and his deed on his deathbed. The purpose of this article is to examine Greene's autobiographical pamphlet in the context of the doctrine of election and to put it into the context of the early modern period. We will find that his repentance is not 'tardy penitence' by analysing his soteriology in this pamphlet.

* I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Arata Ide, who provided me with constructive advice. This thesis owes much to his research. I am likewise deeply grateful to Professor Takami Matsuda of Keio University for his helpful advice.

¹ Some scholars have pointed out the relationship between the Elizabethan tragedies and the doctrine of predestination. See, for instance, Robert G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgments* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1976); Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

² Lori Humphrey Newcomb, 'A Looking Glass for Readers: Cheap Print and the Senses of Repentance', in *Writing Robert Greene: Essays on England's First Notorious Professional Writer*, ed. by Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 133–56 (p. 148); Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars Moriendi*, The Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature, 156 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), pp. 39–40.

Greene lived in the Elizabethan age. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the wave of the Reformation started by Martin Luther (1483–1546) came to England. This doctrinal reform in Christianity caused a great change in the *ars moriendi*. The *ars moriendi* is a general term for guides to greeting a good death. They were published in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and began with two anonymous works: the *Tractatus artis bene moriendi* and the *Ars Moriendi*. Both works were translated into many European languages. The first of these was translated into English in manuscript form in about 1450 and printed by William Caxton (c.1422–1492). Although guides to the art of good death continued being published in the sixteenth century, there is a difference between these guides in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Whereas the *ars moriendi* of the fifteenth century described the deathbed preparations for greeting a good death and focused on death itself, those of the sixteenth century required thinking about one's death not only at the moment of death but throughout life, and these writings placed more emphasis on living than on dying. According to David William Atkinson, whereas the Catholic Church emphasised justification by works and provided detailed instructions, the Protestant notion of election was casuistic and 'allowed for personal judgment that was guided by general moral principles'.³ The loss of ritual removed the opportunity for salvation at the moment of death and diminished the value of the deathbed. Good works in life formed the basis of guaranteed access to the world to come.

The Church of England adopted the principle of *via media* by following a middle-of-the-road policy between Catholicism and Protestantism. It accepted the Thirty-nine Articles as its basic doctrine, which were established by Convocation in 1563 and approved by Parliament in 1571. The articles stipulate the doctrines of Protestantism, such as rejecting purgatory and free will. We can see the influence of predestination in Article XVII.

PREDESTINATION to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in

³ Atkinson, p. xxii.

Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.⁴

Predestination constituted the main part of the Lambeth Articles, which were drawn up in 1595. Article I says, ‘God from eternity has predestined some men to life, and reprobated some to death’.⁵ The Church of England was much affected by the doctrine of election. Furthermore, Article XXV in the Thirty-nine Articles says of the sacraments:

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism, and the Lords Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.⁶

Although retaining some Catholic elements, the Church of England, like many Protestant Churches, approves only two sacraments: baptism and Holy Communion. As noted by Atkinson, the value of sacraments declined and the doctrine of election became strongly conspicuous.⁷

II

This difference changed the value of life and death, and this was reflected in religious literature. We will examine a difference between medieval and early modern literature with regard to the sacraments and predestination. We will analyse *Everyman* as an example of medieval literature. This morality play was produced in the late Middle Ages. Death, as the messenger of God, appears at *Everyman*’s side and tells him that his time to die has come. *Everyman* asks allegorical characters, such as Fellowship and Kindred, to accompany him on

⁴ ‘Articles of Religion’, *The Church of England* [online]. [cited 1 January 2019]. Available from: <<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/articles-religion>>.

⁵ See translation in H. C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 365–66.

⁶ ‘Article of Religion’.

⁷ Atkinson, p. xxii.

a long trip to submit a ‘rekenynge’ of his life to God. This story of a dying man preparing for his death carries Catholic implications. More noteworthy is the scene in which the sin binding Good Deeds is purified.

EVERYMAN In the name of the Holy Trynyté,
 My body sore punysshid shal be.
 Take this, body, for the synne of the flesshe!
 Also thou delytest to go gaye and fresshe,
 And in the waye of dampnacyon thou dyd me brynge;
 Therefore suffre nowe strokes and punysshenge.
 Now of penaunce I wyll wade the water clere
 To save me from Hell and from the fyre.

GOOD DEEDS I thanke God now I can walke and go.
 I am delyvered of my sekensse and wo;
 Therefore with Everyman I wyll go and not spare.
 His good workes I wyll helpe hym to declare.⁸

Everyman atones for his sins by lashing himself with ‘the scourge of Penaunce’, which Confession has given him, and Good Deeds is released from bonds. The process for releasing Good Deeds follows the procedure of the sacrament of penance: One regrets one’s sin, confesses it and atones for it. Everyman is led by Knowledge to Confession and repents ‘with herte and full contryon’ to release Good Deeds. He follows Confession’s guidance to confess his sin and atone for his sin by ‘the scourge of Penaunce’.⁹ Good Deeds’ recovery shows the completion of the sacrament. When his impending death is pronounced, Everyman starts to prepare a good death and releases Good Deeds through the sacrament of penance. They go to his tomb together. Everyman completes his reckoning and goes to heaven; as Doctor (one of the allegorical characters) says, ‘he that hath his accounte hole and sounde / Hye in Heaven he shall be crounde’.¹⁰ This dramatic ending of his salvation reiterates that deathbed preparation for death brings salvation.

In contrast, *The Conflict of Conscience*, performed around 1581, does not carry a ritual aspect. As is made clear by the Thirty-nine Articles, this play restricts the number of

⁸ *Everyman and Its Dutch Original, Elckerlijc*, ed. by Clifford Davidson, Martin W. Walsh and Ton J. Broos, Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), 611–22.

⁹ *Everyman*, 540–619.

¹⁰ *Everyman*, 916–17.

sacraments and omits justification by works. Salvation depends on whether the protagonist, Philologus, repents or not. Repentance is an interior problem for individuals.

Oh ioyful newes, which J report, and bring into your eares,
Philologus, that would haue hangde himself with coard,
Js nowe conuerted vnto God, with manie bitter teares.
By goodly counsel he was woon, all prayse be to the Lorde.
His errours all, he did renounce, his blasphemies he abhorde,
And being conuerted, left his life, exhorting foe and friend,
That do professe the fayth of Christ, to be constant to the ende.¹¹

In this scene, we are told that Philologus repented and restored his faith in Protestantism, and his salvation is implied. Whereas *Everyman* dramatises salvation following the sacrament of penance, this play only informs us of Philologus' repentance. This morality play has two endings. Whereas the second edition ends with Philologus being saved, the first edition ends with him being condemned to damnation by Horror and committing suicide because of despair. This open ending shows that repentance and salvation come not from any ritual but depend entirely on Philologus himself.

When achieving salvation changes from a ritual process to an individual problem, despair changes in quality. Everyman's despair is just part of the process of his salvation. In *The Conflict of Conscience*, despair functions as a sign of damnation, as well as a prerequisite for salvation. Why is despair a sign of damnation? To answer this question, we need to identify the cause of Philologus' despair.

J am refused vtterly, J quite from God am whorld;
My name within the Booke of lyfe, had neuer residence,
Christ prayed not, Christ suffered not, my sinnes to recompence:
But only for the Lordes elect, of which sort J am none,
J feele his iustice towardes mee, his mercy all is gone:¹²

His state of despair originates in the conviction that Christ redeems only the people He has elected and that He will not have mercy on him. From this conviction, he cannot pray the Lord's Prayer or ask God for salvation.¹³ He is predestined to destruction and cannot repent.

¹¹ Nathaniel Woodes. *The Conflict of Conscience 1581*, prepared by Herbert Davis and F. P. Wilson, Malone Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 2411–27.

¹² Woodes, 2032–36.

¹³ Woodes, 2360–66.

When he despairs of his salvation, he says ‘But I, alas, am reprobate’.¹⁴ Reprobation originates in the concept of Calvin’s predestination. He explains this in *The Institution of Christian Religion*:

[S]o he hath hys iudgementes againste the reprobate, whereby he executeth his counsel of them. Whome therefore he hath created vnto the shame of life, and destruction of deathe, that thei shoulde be instrumentes of his wrathe, & examples of his seueriue: fro[m] the[m], yt they may com to their end, sometime he taketh awaie ye power to heare his word, & sometime by the preachinge of it hee more blyndeth & amaseth the[m].¹⁵

The doctrine of predestination teaches that human beings are predestined by God to either salvation or damnation. The elect are called through the Holy Ghost to repent so they can have faith in God. In contrast, a reprobate is not called and cannot repent to have faith. Everything is in the hand of God. It is impossible for human beings to obtain salvation by their own independent actions. In other words, the sacraments do not bring salvation. Human beings cannot know objectively whether they are saved or damned. They have no choice but to respond passively to the calling of God. The assurance of salvation comes not from the objective form of the sacraments but through personal repentance by the individual.

The concept of reprobation influenced the real world as well as literature. How did people in the Elizabethan age receive the doctrine of reprobation? Before answering this question, we will examine the real implication of predestination. The doctrine of predestination holds that the elect will be saved irrespective of their merits. Reprobation is paired with election and is its logical corollary. It denies human free will and asserts the absoluteness of God in protecting justification by faith. Calvin shares this idea. In contrast to this, death is inevitable, and whether they will be saved or damned is a serious problem for a Christian. Calvin rejects this question as prying ‘into the secrete closets of the wisdome of God’ and warns that human beings lose themselves in the labyrinth without finding any answer.¹⁶ He says ‘neither is it mete that man shoulde freely search those thynges which God hath willed to be hidden in himselfe’ and prohibits them from feeling uneasy about their election.¹⁷

¹⁴ Woodes, 2116.

¹⁵ John Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. by Thomas Norton (London: Reinolde Wolfe & Richarde Harison, Anno. 1561), STC (2nd ed.), 4415, fol. 259^r.

¹⁶ Calvin, fol. 289^r.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Although theologians and some clergymen may have understood Calvin's true intention, the general public is likely to have misunderstood it. It is possible that they perverted the doctrine and felt anxiety about their salvation. Robert Burton (1577–1640) wrote in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* about the effect of misunderstanding the doctrine:

‘Many are called, but few are chosen’ (Matt. xx, 16, and xxii, 14), with such-like places of Scripture misinterpreted, strike them with horror; they doubt presently whether they be of this number or no: God's eternal decree of predestination, absolute reprobation, and such fatal tables, they form to their own ruin, and impinge upon this rock of despair.¹⁸

In addition to this passage, Arata Ide pointed out that people in the Elizabethan age were obsessed by the anxiety of reprobation.¹⁹ The doctrine of election framed the narrative of everyday Christian life, as well as theology and literature.

Whereas Catholicism considers rituals such as the sacraments important, Protestantism strictly holds to justification by faith and emphasises predestination. Along with this Catholic/Protestant difference, salvation changed from being the result of objective actions to being primarily (if not exclusively) an inner affair. Thus, despair functions not as a process of salvation but as a framework for the narrative of despairing reprobation. This framework was applied not just to literary works but also to the real lives of the populace. People could construct themselves as being reprobate. We can view *Repentance* within this perspective to examine the mentality of people in the Elizabethan age.

III

The relationship between Greene and Calvinism has been identified by several scholars.²⁰ Although he fashions himself as reprobate in the middle part of *Repentance*, he is saved in

¹⁸ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, introduction by Holbrook Jackson, Everyman's Library (London: J. M. Dent; New York: E. P. Dutton), p. 419.

¹⁹ Arata Ide, ‘Zetsubō suru Richard: Shingakuteki Context karano Kokoromi (Despairing Richard in the Theological Context)’, *Shakespeare no Higeiki* (Kenkyu Sha, 1998), pp. 23–45 (pp. 29–32).

²⁰ See, for instance, Ide, ‘Zetsubō suru Richard’, pp. 23–45 (pp. 29–32); Newcomb, ‘A Looking Glass for Readers’, pp. 133–56; Richard Helgerson, *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 102–04; Walter R. Davis, *Idea and Act in Elizabethan Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 170; W. W. Barker, ‘Rhetorical Romance: The ‘Frisolous Toyes’ of Robert Greene’, in *Unfolded Tales*, ed. by G. M. Logan and Gordon Teskey (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 74–97 (p. 97).

the end. It is unusual for a reprobate to be saved. What framework does he use to tell his readers of his salvation? Greene's despairing state of mind in *Repentance* is described in the framework of a reprobate despairing over his inexorable fate. When he rejects his friends' advice and goes back to his lodgings, Greene is 'checked by the mightie hand of God' and takes to his bed. He suffers the qualms of conscience about the roguery he has committed and despairs of salvation.

Why did God create me to bee a vessell of wrath? Why did hee breath life into me, thus to make me a lost sheepe? Oh I feele a hell already in my conscience: the number of my sinnes do muster before my eies, the poore mens complaints that I haue wronged, cries out in mine eares and saith, *Robin Greene* thou art damned: nay, the iustice of God tells mee I cannot bee saued.²¹

His despair is caused by a book named *Resolution*.²² He reads it and recalls his prodigal early life. He finds himself to have committed a sin against the Holy Ghost and is convinced that he is reprobated by God.

Oh I haue sinned, not against the Father, nor against the Sonne, but against the Holy Ghost: for I presumed vpon grace, and when the spirit of God cried in my mind & thought, and said, drunkennes is a vice, whoredome is a vice: I carelesly (in contempt) resisted this motion, and as it were in a brauery, committed these sinnes with greedines.²³

The sin against the Holy Ghost is the most dreadful of all Christian sins. It is a mortal sin and thus can never be pardoned. Elizabethan theologians often referred to this sin.²⁴ For Calvin,

²¹ *The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, M. A., 15 vols*, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart (n. p.: n. pub., 1881–86; New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), XII, 166.

²² Its proper name is *The First Book of Christian Exercise Appertaining to Resolution* (1582), which was written by Robert Persons (1546–1610), a Jesuit. It was reprinted repeatedly and adapted for Protestants by Edmund Bunny (1540–1618), a Church of England clergyman. Greene presumably read Bunny's Protestant version.

²³ *Robert Greene*, XII, 167.

²⁴ See, for instance, Henry Barrow, *A Brief Discouerie of the False Church* (Dort?: S.n., 1590 [i.e. 1591?]), STC (2nd ed.), 1517, p. 37, 'Surely, well ought charitie to border [on] yt self within the compace of sobrietie, and not peremptorily to [iu]dge or determine of any, who belong to Godes election, and who be [re]probates (which God hath kept secret to himself) vnlesse they see [th]ese damnable signes of the sinne against the holy Ghost, vpon them: [th]et cannot charity iudge or pronounce any to be graines of wheate, [w]hiles they lie together hidden & vnseperated from this filthy chaffe, [th]ese apparant wicked & wickednes; for charitie must be directed and [iu]dged by faith, & faith by the word of God.'; William

according to Hunter, apostasy is the mortal sin, and those who commit it reveal by their action ‘that they are among the reprobate’.²⁵ Sin against the Holy Ghost is a cause of reprobation, and Greene fashions himself as reprobate by saying that he has committed it.

However, Greene is not taken away to Hell by devils, nor does he commit suicide. As he reads through the *Resolution*, he derives comfort from it. He recovers from his despair and, like Philologus in the second edition, is assured of salvation.

Yet calling vnto mind the words of *Esay*, that at what time soeuer a sinner doth repent him from the bottome of his heart, the Lord would wipe away all his wickednes out of his remembrance.

Thus beeing at a battaile betweene the spirite and the flesh, I beganne to feele a greater comfort in my mind, so that I did [with] teares confesse and acknowledge, that although I was a most miserable sinner, yet the anguish that Christ suffered on the Crosse, was able to purge and cleanse me from all my offences: so that taking hold with faith vpon the promises of the Gospell, I waxed strong in spirite, and became able to resist and withstand all the desperate attempts that Sathan had giuen before to my weake and feeble conscience.²⁶

Christ’s blood redeems Greene. Although the *Resolution* triggers his despair, it also assures him of salvation. He is called through the Holy Ghost and accepts the calling of God with repentance. He is one of the elect and has never committed the sin against the Holy Ghost.

So far, we have seen that Greene narrates his reprobation and salvation in the context of predestination. However, we find the logic of his salvation a little strange.

And therefore let all men learne these two lessons; not to despaire, because God may worke in them through his spirit at the last houre; nor to presume, least God giue them ouer for their presumption, and deny them repentance, and so they die impenitent: which *finalis impenitentia* is a manifest sinne against the holy Ghost.²⁷

Perkins, *A Case of Conscience the Greatest Taht Euer Was, How a Man May Know, Whether He Be the Son of God or No* (Edinburgh: Robert Walde-graue, 1592), STC (2nd ed.), 19666, p. 14, ‘If a man see his brother sin a sin, that is not vnto death; (that is, which may be pardoned,) let him ask (pardon in his behalfe) and he shal giue him life for them that sinne not vnto death: there is a sinne vnto death, (after which, necessarilie damnation followeth, as the sinne against the holy Ghost:’.

²⁵ Hunter, p. 25.

²⁶ Robert Greene, XII, 170.

²⁷ Robert Greene, XII, 180.

He recounts his early prodigal life and gives his readers two precepts: ‘not to despaire’ and not ‘to presume’. He identifies an unrepentant death as a sin against the Holy Ghost and urges rogues to repent of their prodigality.

And now to you all that liue and reuell in such wickednesse as I haue done, to you I write, and in Gods name wish you to looke to yourselues, and to reforme your selues for the safe gard of your owne soules: dissemble not with God, but seeke grace at his handes; hee hath promist it, and he will performe it.²⁸

The doctrine of predestination holds that whether human beings repent or not depends completely on God because they have no free will. A reprobate will not repent or believe in God; the elect will repent and have faith. Everything is in God’s hands. However, Greene conveys the impression that human repentance depends on humans themselves. He explains that a person who repents will be saved. In Calvin’s soteriology, a person will repent if God calls (i.e., saves) him. Greene reverses this; if a person repents, God will then save him or her. The idea that a person’s act can bring salvation is rejected by Protestants, including Calvinists and Anglicans.²⁹

Pelagianism, which holds that human beings obtain salvation through their own acts based on their free will, is one of the most heretical doctrines. It is surprising that Greene could publish such a heretical pamphlet in the Elizabethan age, when censorship of printed matter was strict. Although he places great importance on good works, he cannot agree with the heretical doctrine of Pelagianism. What is his real intention? We find the key to this question in Theologus’ lines in *The Conflict of Conscience*.

Wherefore he saith, as Peter saide, see that you doo make knowne,
Your owne election by your workes: againe, S. Iames doth say,
Shew mee thy faith, and by my works, my faith shall thee be shown.
And whereupon his owne offence, he dooth to them bewray,
Wheras he did vaine gloryously, vpon a dead faith stay:

²⁸ Robert Greene, XII, 178–79.

²⁹ Calvin, fol. 193r, ‘bycause yf righteousnesse be vpholden with workes, it must needes by & by fal downe before the sight of God, it is contained in ye only mercie of God, the only co[m]municating of Christ, & therefore in only faith.’; ‘Articles of Religion’, Article XIII, ‘WORKS done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity.’

Which for the inwarde righteousnesse, he always did suspect,
And heereupon all godlynes of lyfe, he did neglect.³⁰

Here Theologus explains the significance of showing one's faith through good works. Woodes emphasised not only inner faith but also outer good works. Ide attributed his soteriology to that of the Cambridge experimental predestinarians led by William Perkins (1558–1602), a theologian and a Church of England clergyman.³¹ These predestinarian divines believe that 2 Peter 1:10 is 'God's command and man's formula for proving to himself his own predestination to salvation'.³² This is not a heterodox view in the Church of England. Thus, Greene's emphasis on good works is not drawn from Pelagianism but is derived from these predestinarians in the Church of England.³³ What Greene says is not that one who repents will be saved; rather, he says that one should show one's faith if one repents.

Conclusion

We have traced the changes in the doctrine between the Middle Ages and the early modern period and examined Greene's despair and soteriology in the theological context of the Elizabethan age. The question now arises: Did Greene really repent? Greene was a prolific and changeable writer. He changed his style to follow changing trends. It is tempting to question the sincerity of his words even on his deathbed.³⁴ However, it seems likely that he genuinely repented. Edwin Haviland Miller noted that he made five textual changes in later reprinted versions of *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* in 1592 by intentionally deleting offensive words and personally identifiable information.³⁵ The deletions Greene made

³⁰ Woodes, 2281–87.

³¹ Arata Ide, 'Nathaniel Woodes, Foxeian Martyrology and the Radical Protestants of Norwich in the 1570s', *Reformation*, 13(2008), 103–32 (pp. 110–11).

³² R. T. Kendal, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 80.

³³ 'Articles of Religion', Article XII, '[Y]et are they [i.e. good works] pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.'

³⁴ See, for instance, John Clark Jordan, *Robert Greene* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1915; repr. New York: Octagon Books, 1965), p. 204, 'we wish he were more trustworthy, for it would save us trouble in understanding him'.

³⁵ Edwin Haviland Miller, 'Deletions in Robert Greenes *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier* (1592)', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 15.3 (May 1952), 277–82 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3816357>> [accessed 24 May 2018].

correspond with his advice to Nashe in *Groatworth of Wit*.³⁶ They add credence to his real repentance on his deathbed. He really repented and showed his repentance by deleting offensive words.

Greene rejected his early works in his last two autobiographical works and in the Repentance pamphlets.³⁷ Although he says that he wants to burn his works, he is proud of his coney-catcher series. He says in *Repentance*:

But I thanke God that hee put it in my head, to lay open the most horrible coosenages of the common Conny-catchers, Cooseners, and Crossebiters, which I haue indifferently handled in those my seuerall discourses already imprinted. And my trust is that those discour / ses will doe great good, and bee very beneficiall to the Commonwealth of England.³⁸

For him, discovering ‘the most horrible coosenages’—as well as modifying *A Quip*—may have been a part of his repentance. He showed his repentance by doing ‘good works’. When he realised that his death was approaching, he not only repented in his mind but also practiced good works during the short time left to him. He did not postpone his repentance until his last moment. Greene’s emphasis on good works is derived from the views of predestinarians in the Church of England. His repentance is not an empty theory but an act of true and orthodox faith, which he emphasised in *Repentance*. Greene’s autobiographical pamphlet allows us a glimpse into how a dying man prepared for his death in Elizabethan England.

³⁶ Robert Greene, XII, 178.

³⁷ The Repentance pamphlets are a series of pamphlets on the subject of repentance published in 1590: *Greene’s Vision, Never Too Late, Francesco’s Fortunes* and *Greene’s Mourning Garment*.

³⁸ Robert Greene, XII, 178.