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Theodore B. Leinwand  
Theatre, Finance and Society in Early Modern England  
£35.00 (Hardback)  
ISBN 0-521-64031-8  

In early modern drama and history debtors display little guilt, remorse, envy, disgust,  
fear, or grief, but other affects recur: embarrassment, bravado, humility, ease, tenacity,  
and outrage. These can have bodily correlates and it is disarming to learn that in  
Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* Richard Easy's name signifies that he is rich and doing  
his 'ease', or shitting away his inheritance. Leinwand starts with his least interesting  
material, the late sixteenth century credit crunch when everyone from monarch to  
labourer was borrowing, and anyone might seek to exploit another's credit rating, as  
Bassanio does in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Leinwand's second chapter  
is about city debtors and how they got themselves into, and hopefully out of, debtors'  
prison. Surveying Chapman, Marston, and Jonson's *Eastward Ho!*, Middleton's  
*Michaelmas Term* and Cooke's *Greene's Tu Quoque*, Leinwand details the complex  
manoeuvring by which debtors evaded creditors and he also gives fascinating  
historical material on the prisons. The best comes last with Leinwand's final chapter  
readings of Jonson's *The Alchemist* and Shakespeare *The Merchant of Venice*. In  
Jonson's 'venture tripartite' and in the East India Company the strain of exertion lends  
moral weight to what would otherwise be mere extortion, and similarly the sadness  
of Shakespeare's Antonio is not mysterious: it "does the work of much-needed ballast,  
given the Venetian gallants' effervescence" (p. 115). In lesser books, New Historicism's  
paralleling of unlikely co-texts is beginning to hit the law of diminishing returns--the  
claimed homologies can be excessively tenuous--but Leinwand's book will persuade  
and excite all serious students of the period's drama.

Gabriel Egan