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BOOK REVIEW

Heather Hirschfeld, *The End of Satisfaction: Drama and Repentance in the Age of Shakespeare*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014. xi+239 pp. $55.00/£36.31. ISBN: 978-0801452741 (hb).

How much is enough? In this thoughtful and stimulating study, Heather Hirschfeld considers the concept of 'satisfaction' in early modern English drama. She begins by tracing the development of the term in Christian theology, noting its juridical roots in Roman Law (7–8). Hirschfeld is persuasive on patristic and medieval debates about the penitential and sacramental aspects of satisfaction, examining in particular the theology of the *via moderna*: the will to do good, alongside God's promise in the Covenant, is central to its understanding of atonement (25). Humans may do enough to remit sin. Broadly speaking, this theology comes under attack from thinkers like Luther and Calvin. As Hirschfeld writes, 'the Reformation marks the historical juncture at which *satis* was *satis* only for Christ, when humans recalibrated – and rejected – their potential for doing enough in matters of atonement' (36). This is a well-ploughed historical furrow and at times the author conflates satisfaction with the much broader and arguably more important category of justification. Nevertheless, Hirschfeld's account is distinguished by the sensitivity with which she discusses the implications of this shift. Her account of affect and assurance in Protestantism is particularly fine and the author is well-versed in theology and polemics.

The book successfully interweaves intellectual and literary history. The author persuasively argues that the early modern theatre provided a central arena for debating 'satisfaction'. Chapter Two looks at the *Descensus* tradition and Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. It is not easy to say something new about *Faustus*, but Hirschfeld's argument that the drama is 'a version of the medieval harrowing of hell play' (39) is subtle and convincing. She explores Protestant debates about whether or not Christ actually descended into hell between his death and resurrection, throwing new light on Faustus' conflicted identity. The next chapter examines the relationship between revenge tragedy and satisfaction. Hirschfeld contends that Protestantism reinforced 'a relation between penitence and self-revenge or self-punishment' (70). She looks at Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, showing that the revengers in these plays do not just blame others; they also excoriate themselves. I had not fully appreciated that this facet of the revenger's identity may be bound up with contemporary debates about satisfaction. Like Reformed repentance, vengeance is never quite enough for Hieronimo, Hamlet, and Vindice.

The final two chapters focus on satisfaction in discussions of economics and marriage. Chapter Four looks at the morality of 'enough' in a burgeoning commercial marketplace. Hirschfeld notes the paradox that while early modern men and women were

expected to adhere to notions of equity and 'enough' in matters of trade, 'it was not something that they could do or feel in matters of atonement' (96). Additionally, the problem of usury, of excess value, challenged the logic of the economic moralists. The reading of satisfaction in *The Merchant of Venice* is not always easy to follow, especially the discussion of the trial scene. However, the suggestion that Portia 'is a master of competing fractions, and she uses her acumen to demonstrate the impossibility of the "enough" for which both Antonio and Shylock yearn' (115) is original and significant. Chapter Five studies how understandings of marriage relate to ideas of satisfaction and repentance. In the case of the former, a successful marriage might provide an outlet for sexual desires that would otherwise be condemned. Yet the possibility that 'enough' may quickly become a demand for more is threatening to patriarchy. In the case of the latter, the ill-conceived or hastily contracted marriage may evoke a desire for repentance that can never be properly satisfied. Hirschfeld's exploration of the theological and cultural problems at play here is persuasively done. Her claim that tragedy 'is the genre of the *repented* marriage in addition to the enforced one' (127) is proven in sensitive readings of *Othello* and *Love's Pilgrimage*.

This book is part of a recent trend in early modern literary studies for close examination of a single word or, to use Raymond William's term 'keyword', in its cultural contexts. While I have outlined some of the benefits of this approach, it does also have its limitations. With such a sharply defined semantic focus, the conceptual framework will only stretch so far. By the final chapters of the book there is occasionally a sense of repetition rather than expansion. The historical parameters of this book are also somewhat imprecise. The earliest play studied here is Wager's *Enough is as Good as a Feast* (1570) and the latest is Beaumont and Fletcher's *Love's Pilgrimage* (1614–15). The local readings of these plays are all illuminating, as I have noted. But what this reader misses at least is an overview of whether or not dramatic attitudes to 'satisfaction' shift or change over the period studied. Perhaps they do not. This may account for the reiteration noted above. However, my feeling is that the local focus obscures a broader story about semantic and theological change that is only glimpsed briefly in these pages. For example, I would like to see what Hirschfeld makes of satisfaction in Caroline tragedy where debates between Calvinists and Arminians often colour dramatic debate. I would also have enjoyed reading more on the anti-theatrical tradition, briefly mentioned in the Conclusion. In a book of some 239 pages, 152 are devoted to text and the remaining eighty-seven to notes, bibliography, and index. Though copiously researched, perhaps the author could have usefully cut back on some of the notes and included another chapter that broadened the historical frame out more fully? The book is well-produced and standards of copy-editing are good (I noticed a couple of slips: page 31 has '*Christia*' for '*Christian*'; page 84 has 'Gratizna' for 'Gratiana'; page 140 has some inconsistency in the spelling of 'Mark-antonio'). Occasionally the prose becomes a little clotted and unclear. But this remains an important and compelling book. It should be read by anyone with an interest in early modern drama and religion.

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