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Salem Press Announces a New Addition to the *Critical Insights* Series *Critical Insights: The Merchant of Venice*

The Merchant of Venice is one of William Shakespeare's most often performed—but also most controversial—dramas. Technically a comedy, the play has long been regarded as having dark, even tragic, overtones. Its most memorable character, Shylock, is also its apparent villain. This volume explores the play from many different points of view while seeking to understand why this work has long aroused, and continues to arouse, such strong admiration, fascination, and disagreement.

This volume, like all others in the *Critical Insights* series, is divided into several sections. It begins with an introductory “About This Volume” essay, followed by another work titled “Leverage, Risk, and Fragility in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*,” by Edwin Wong. This is followed by a Biography of William Shakespeare written by volume editor Robert C. Evans.

A collection of four critical contexts essays are intended to treat the novel

- 1) From a historical vantage point
- 2) In terms of its critical reception
- 3) Using a specific critical lens
- 4) And by comparing and contrasting it with another important work.

This section opens with an essay by Matthew Steggle titled, “*The Merchant of Venice* and ‘The Merchant of Emden’: Ballads, Theatergrams, and Deloney,” followed by a piece by Joyce Ahn, “Recent Criticism of *The Merchant of Venice*: An Overview,” This essay reviews recent criticisms of *The Merchant of Venice* within the 2020 published work of essays, *The Merchant of Venice: The State of Play*, where it explores the play's representation of various characters, themes, and motifs through different critical lenses regarding antisemitism, economic concerns, and race. The following two articles are written by Kent Cartwright and James Hirsh respectively. The first, “*The Merchant of Venice*: How to Make Sense When a Play Contains Too Many Causes and Too Many Meanings,” goes to understand the play from looking at the play's internal dynamics and the context or reasoning behind certain character's actions. In the final essay, “Odd Patterns of Self-Addressed Speeches in *The Merchant of Venice*: An Empirical Investigation,” Hirsh discusses the pattern of soliloquies within the play, the odd split of soliloquies between the characters and how this implies the hidden intention from Shakespeare.

Following these four Critical Context essays is the **Critical Readings** section of this book, which contains the following essays:

- Contexts of Shylock’s Contentment, by Christopher Baker
- “The first boy for a thousand ducats”: Commonwealth and the Antisocial Family in *The Merchant of Venice*, by Matthew M. Thiele
- Shylock’s Use of Repetition in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, by Robert C. Evans
- “Hath not a Jew eyes?” on Film and Stage, by Christopher Baker
- Opening Drawings in Some Early Illustrated Editions of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, by Robert C. Evans
- Illustrations of the “Trial Scene” from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, by Robert C. Evans
- Additional Illustrations of the “Trial Scene” from Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, by Jordan Bailey
- The 1980 Televised BBC Production of *The Merchant of Venice*: A Survey of Reviews, by Eric J. Sterling
- The 2004 Film of *The Merchant of Venice*: A Survey of Reviews, by Robert C. Evans
- The 2015 “Shakespeare’s Globe” Production of *The Merchant of Venice*: A Survey of Reviews, by Stephanie Reed

Each essay in *Critical Insights: The Merchant of Venice* includes a list of **Works Cited** and detailed endnotes. In the final section, **Resources**, easy-to-follow lists are provided to help guide the reader through important dates and moments in the author’s life, beginning with a **Chronology of William Shakespeare’s Life**. This is followed by a list of **Works by William Shakespeare** and a **Bibliography**. Finally, this section closes with an **About the Editor** section, **Contributors**, and a detailed **Index**.

The *Critical Insights* Series distills the best of both classic and current literary criticism of the world’s most studied literature. Edited and written by some of academia’s most distinguished literary scholars, *Critical Insights: The Merchant of Venice* provides authoritative, in-depth scholarship that students and researchers will rely on for years. This volume is destined to become a valuable purchase for all.

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