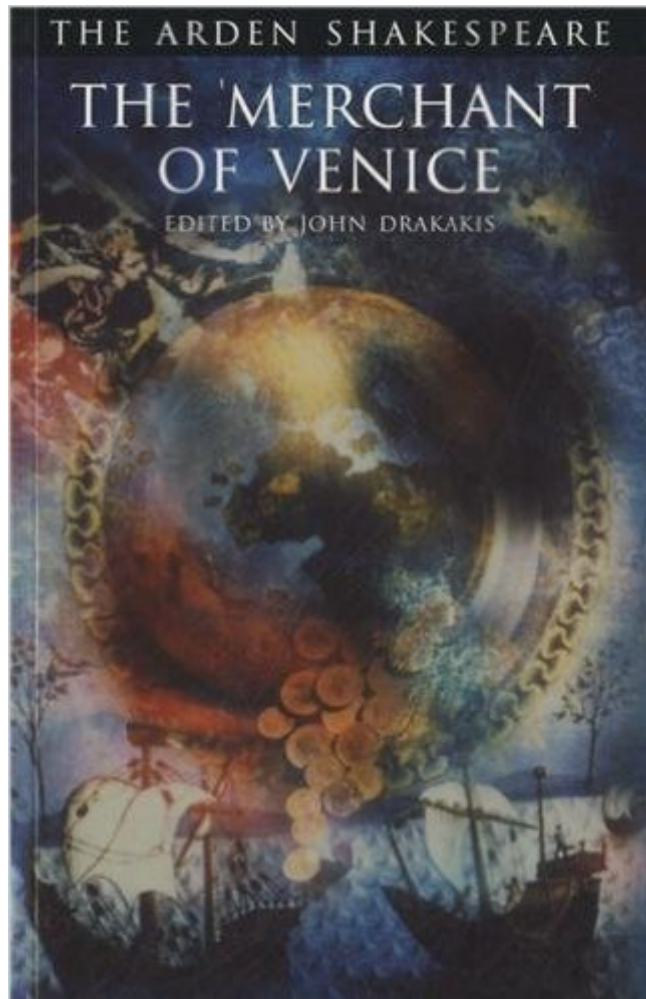


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The Merchant Of Venice: Third Series (Arden Shakespeare)



Synopsis

The Merchant of Venice is perhaps most associated not with its titular hero, Antonio, but with the complex figure of the money lender, Shylock. The play was described as a comedy in the First Folio but its modern audiences find it more problematic to categorize. The vilification of Shylock "the Jew" can be very uncomfortable for a modern, post-holocaust audience and debates continue as to whether Shakespeare's portrayal of this complex man is sympathetic or anti-Semitic. John Drakakis' comprehensive introduction traces the stage history of the figure of the Jew and looks boldly at twenty-first century issues surrounding it. He also explores other themes of the play such as father/daughter relations, the power of money and the forceful character of Portia, to offer readers an energetic, original and revelatory reading of this challenging play.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I teach Shakespeare at the college level and studied with one of the world's top Shakespeare scholars in graduate school (I earned my Ph.D. in 1995). For the last year I've been contemplating the differences between the Arden second and third series. While the second series follows a fairly traditional and philological pattern in its prefatory material (i.e., text, sources, critical history, etc.), the third has changed that pattern considerably. Now, the editor's (for this volume, John Drakakis, whom I do not know) preface is far more essayistic, following what appears to be a pattern of the editor's own design suggested by his theoretical approach to the material. In some of the third series volumes, that's been a bonus. I rather liked the third series edition of Richard II, for instance, as well

as Taming of the Shrew. But this particular edition gave me pause. Clearly Prof. Drakakis is learned about so much that has ado with this text, but I leave his introduction with a sense that he really isn't in control of it so much as he is showing off. He has a clear investment in post-structuralist theory (I will guess him to be something of a New Historicist, or influenced by them, given his thick description of Venetian economics), and his introduction is full of intellectual cant and shrouds of conceptual smoke (I could barely finish it, and wondered at points why I was bothering). I always felt that the earlier series of Ardens were aimed at helping an educated general reader get an advanced view of the play; this text made me feel as if I were being steered in one very specific theoretical direction.

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