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What was Shakespeare's attitude to Semitism? The Introduction to this edition of *The Merchant of Venice* opens by addressing this vital issue raised by the play, and goes on to study the sources, background, and date, including a discussion of Sigmund Freud's essay on 'The Three Caskets'.

Professor Halio interprets the play's contradictions, inconsistencies, and complementarities, especially as these relate to the overarching theme of bonds and bondage. A survey of the play's stage history ranges from discussions of its early staging to important twentieth-century productions and performances outside England, particularly in Israel.